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BOSSES AND CORBELS
OF
EXETER CATHEDRAL

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BOSSES & CORBELS

OF

EXETER CATHEDRAL

AN ILLUSTRATED STUDY IN

DECORATIVE & SYMBOLIC DESIGN

BY

E. K. PRIDEAUX

AND

G. R. HOLT SHAFTO

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'The Beautiful rests on the foundations of the Necessary.'

EMERSON.

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PREFACE

We do not venture to solicit the reader's kind indulgence for our pages simply because they afford some illustrations of architectural detail. Such trespass on time and good nature would be unreasonable, for we are well aware that only a moderate degree of success has attended our efforts to reproduce our subjects. This is almost inevitable, for many of the bosses are very inaccessible, some buried in gloom and others vexed with cross-lights. But we have made a sincere attempt to collect some data by which tradition and other sources of historical evidence may be sifted. In this way some of the many problems as to dates and builders—problems which must ever attach to such venerable shrines as Exeter Cathedral—may be brought a stage nearer to their solution; for on many points the fabric itself is the ultimate, if not the sole, authority.

To bring once more into due prominence the motives which governed the mediaeval craftsman's choice of subject or design, and to trace the ebb and flow of the tides of artistic impulse, has also been a definite part of our purpose in making this book.

Despite the existence of many treatises—some of them of great excellence—on sacred archaeology, we have briefly rehearsed the accepted conventions which governed the representations of the various symbolical scenes and subjects. Nor was it our sole purpose to consult the interests of the general reader in doing this, for it is only by a careful study of the details of many of these conventions that the true import of much mediaeval symbolism can be determined. Our subjects represent an age in which the carver's chisel, the painter's brush, and the glassworker's furnace combined to make symbolism the veritable 'world-speech' of the Christian religion. The attempt to invest the details of outward form with a precise significance led, doubtless, to much distortion and to extravagances that verge on incoherence. That it was capable of noble uses the symbolical description of the Church, found in a MS. copy of the Psalter

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now preserved at Boulogne, bears witness:—'*Fundamentum est Fides, Altitudo eius est Spes, Latitudo eius est Caritas, Longitudo est Perseverantia.*' Our concern, however, has been with the interpretation of symbolism, not its criticism.

We gladly avail ourselves of this opportunity to acknowledge our manifold indebtedness. A complete list of authorities consulted would need many pages, and we have, therefore, sought to do justice to the labours of other workers in this wide field by acknowledgment and citation in the text whenever necessary.

To the Exeter City Librarian, Mr. H. Tapley-Soper, F.R.Hist.Soc., our work from its earliest inception owes much, and his ready help, especially in bibliographical matters, cannot be too emphatically acknowledged.

The courtesy of the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Marlborough (Dean of Exeter), the kindly interest and help of the Chancellor (the Rev. Canon W. J. Edmonds) and of the Rev. E. T. Foweraker, we very gratefully record. Nor would we willingly omit mention of our indebtedness to the vergers, Messrs. Palmer and Couch, and their assistants for many services readily and cheerfully rendered. Among those who have given us valuable assistance and suggestions we must mention with special gratitude Messrs. John Bilson, F.S.A., and G. C. Druce.

Photographers will appreciate the peculiar difficulties which attended many of our attempts to obtain our illustrations. To Messrs. Dallmeyer and Messrs. R. and J. Beck for the excellence of their telephotographic apparatus and for their assistance and advice we owe much. Fellow-craftsmen will be interested to know that the average magnification necessary for the illustrations of the bosses on the scale here reproduced was 5. If any of our technical data are likely to be of service to others undertaking similar tasks we shall be glad to furnish them.

E.K.P.
G.R.H.S.

Jan., 1910.

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ERRATA.

P. 7, l. 21.—For 'thus' *read* 'then.'

P. 9, l. 26.—For 'door' *read* 'doorway.'

P. 12, Title.—For 'easternmost bosses' *read* 'easternmost bays.'

P. 26, l. 20.—For 'paint' *read* 'colouring.'

P. 75, l. 32.—For 'moulded' *read* 'modelled.'

P. 88, l. 33.—For 'the coloured bosses' *read* 'the bosses of this period.'

P. 89, l. 14.—*Add* 'But it is more likely that the thirty were *some* of those belonging to the presbytery.'

P. 97, l. 14.—For '117' *read* '120'; and l. 16, for '120' *read* '117.'

P. 115, l. 40.
P. 167, l. 24.
P. 175, l. 42.
} For 'Hewitt' *read* 'Hewett.'

P. 186, l. 27.—After 'and' *insert* 'on p. 32.'

BOSSES AND CORBELS OF EXETER CATHEDRAL.

CHAPTER I.

The Boss; its Origin, and its History in Relation to Exeter Cathedral.

The beauty of the vaulting of Exeter Cathedral is now so generally known and admired that there may seem but little excuse for inviting special attention to it. Even the uninstructed eye is at once attracted to this feature of the interior of the church, and few can fail to recognise its unusual excellence. To students and lovers of architecture it is well and widely known, for it possesses surpassing interest as a perfect example of the logical English development of the early Gothic quadripartite ribbed vault.

There are, however, in addition to its structural character and general impressiveness, serried ranks of beauty and interest half-hidden in its distant heights; and the immediate object of this book is to facilitate a closer acquaintance therewith for all, whether students or amateurs, to whom such service may prove welcome. Every junction of every rib in the many-ribbed vault is completed by a carved keystone, or boss. Some, resplendent in blue and red and gold, glow like jewels in the vault; others in the quieter beauty of clean-cut stone are not less eloquent of pious thoughts, of religious ideals, of patient and loving labour. Many are of an admirable craftsmanship which is none too easily discerned even by the sharpest of eyes. They constitute a wonderful series of examples of one of the richest periods of decorative Gothic art, and this in itself is a sufficient reason for their careful delineation and study.

Obscured for centuries by coats of wash and colour, it was not until the restoration undertaken by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1870 was completed that their full beauty and value were re-discovered. Not only were the bosses revealed

afresh but, to quote a witness of the restoration, 'it was discovered that the sculptured work had been gently dealt with by the hand of time, and even the colours remained to an extent that made their revival easy and accurate.'* The reference to colouring can only be applied to those in the eastern chapels. In the 1888 edition of ARCHDEACON FREEMAN'S *Architectural History of Exeter Cathedral*, edited by the Rev. E. V. Freeman, notes concerning the restoration of 1870-77 were added, in which it is stated (p. 96) that 'the colouring of ribs and cells of the vaulting have given back to the roof its original richness. Not that the work here [in the choir] claims to be a *literal* reproduction; for neither are the corbels regilded nor do the colours above rigidly correspond to those formerly employed—experiment having proved in this as in other instances that an exact resuscitation of mediaeval colouring cannot be relied on to commend itself to modern judgment.' It is worthy of note that at the close of the extensive works for whose direction he was responsible Sir Gilbert Scott pronounced the vaulting, as a whole, to be, in his opinion, the finest example of its kind to be found in all Europe.

Owing, probably, to some difficulties which attend its illustration, the task which we have here attempted has not, so far as we are aware, been undertaken before on any comprehensive scale. Mr. W. Cotton, whom we have just cited, tells us that, at the time of the restoration, he caused several water-colour drawings of the bosses to be made from the scaffolding then erected: this work is to be found in the Fisher Library of the Royal Albert Memorial at Exeter. Plates made from some of these drawings were published in 1900 with descriptive notes. The work was but fragmentary and the illustrations can only be considered as, at best, very 'free renderings' of the original lovely texts in stone. In colour, outline and detail, considerable departures from the actual were allowed; no systematic explanation or arrangement was attempted; in too many cases incorrect descriptions occur, and there are many obvious errors for which

* *Bosses and Corbels of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter, Exeter*, by W. COTTON, F.S.A. The original MS. is in the Royal Albert Memorial Public Library, Exeter. An abridgment was published in 1900.

it is not easy to account. At the same time, Mr. Cotton's descriptions and conjectures have the merit of drawing attention to the possibilities of the subject.

Many of the difficulties we are very conscious that we have failed to overcome, but all our illustrations have at least such accuracy as the careful employment of photography can ensure. Many of our suggested explanations of the bosses and interpretations of their subjects or symbolism are put forward with much hesitation. In these matters we can only hope that the illustrations themselves may serve to make the way easier for others who may be inclined to devote to the question the attention it deserves.

At the outset we should like to make it quite clear that no regular scale has been observed in our illustrations. In this matter the reader is referred once for all to the general statements as to dimensions. We consider that the purposes of the book are best accomplished by adopting in each case such a size as will readily reveal those details which constitute the distinctive features of each subject.

For the assistance of those unfamiliar with technicalities, it may be as well to explain briefly the origin and use of the boss in Gothic architecture. Many people looking up to a ribbed roof of either stone or wood and noting these carved clusters of foliage or other designs starred over it at regular intervals, would naturally conclude that they are an ornamental finish, suitably placed to relieve from stiffness and dulness the repetition of the lines of the ribs. If they had any knowledge of masonry or joinery, it might also occur to them that, as these ornaments are only seen at the intersections of stone ribs or wooden beams, they serve the additional purpose of masking the joints of the intersecting members; thus hiding any clumsiness or awkwardness in the fitting of one part to another. It is quite true that a boss fulfils both these functions. But it serves another, and that a most important, purpose in a stone-ribbed vault. It is, in point of fact, a keystone; and, as everyone knows, a keystone is much more than an ornament, more than a convenient method of managing an awkward joint: it is an integral part of the actual structure. To appreciate fully its importance it is necessary to explain briefly what a Gothic ribbed vault really is.

All roofs and ceilings aim, primarily, at the same thing, namely:—to cover a given walled-in space, so as to protect it efficiently and permanently from wet, heat, cold, fire and all deleterious external influences. The Gothic stone-ribbed vault aims at doing this with the least possible expenditure of material consistent with stability.

It is not necessary here to consider the whole structural system resulting from the pursuit of this aim—though to those interested in architecture it is a fascinating branch of the subject. Suffice it to say that by the end of the thirteenth century the principles involved had in England developed into such a vault as we have in Exeter. Here we see the spreading groups of stone ribs uplifting their graceful curves in support of the whole covering. These ribs are the skeleton of the vault; all the masonry that lies between them depends for its security upon the stability of this skeleton and is a mere filling-in, or, in architectural language, the web. With a well-built skeleton the web may be very thin, and therefore light. In different instances and periods it varies considerably; from eleven inches at Chartres to only four-and-a-half at Henry VII's Chapel, Westminster. In Exeter it is fairly thick, but the actual measurements of the masonry are not ascertainable on account of the concrete on the back.

To secure the stability of the skeleton of the vault—obviously a matter of the first importance—every rib thereof is built as a separate arch, springing independently from its point of support in the direction assigned and spanning the space allotted to it. Just as a keystone is often employed at the apex of a single arch by way of extra security for its construction, so when several arches intersecting one another at the crown of the vault are concerned the keystone becomes a very important and helpful part of the construction. Each arch cannot here have a separate keystone of its own, but one must be contrived which will offer an accurately shaped surface to each of the arches that arrive at the same intersecting point, to wedge into secure contact the voussoirs of which they are built.

In our earliest ribbed vaults, the choir-aisles of Durham (1093-6), these keystones are not 'shouldered' or accurately shaped to receive the ribs. Mr. Bilson, in his *Beginnings*

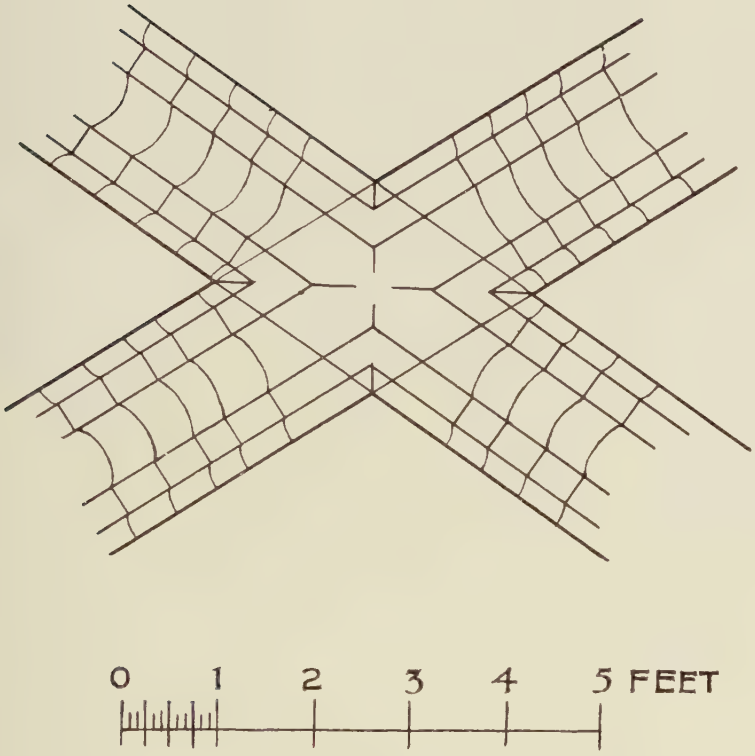

Fig. 1.

of Gothic Architecture, says that they 'are jointed in a primitive fashion; the sides of the keys are not shouldered for the ribs, but the joints continue the lines of the sides of the ribs, and stones of nearly triangular shape are introduced next the key to bring the next joint square with the rib.' [This point will be more clearly seen by a reference to Fig. 1, which Mr. Bilson has very kindly furnished for this book.] But a little later, in the vaults of Winchester north transept, reconstructed after the fall of the tower in 1107, 'the keys are shouldered to receive the ribs which abut against them, with a joint at right angles to the direction of the rib.'

Primarily, the boss is just this many-sided, comprehensive keystone. On the following page is a photograph (Fig. 2) and a diagram (Fig. 3) of a portion of the eastern vaulting

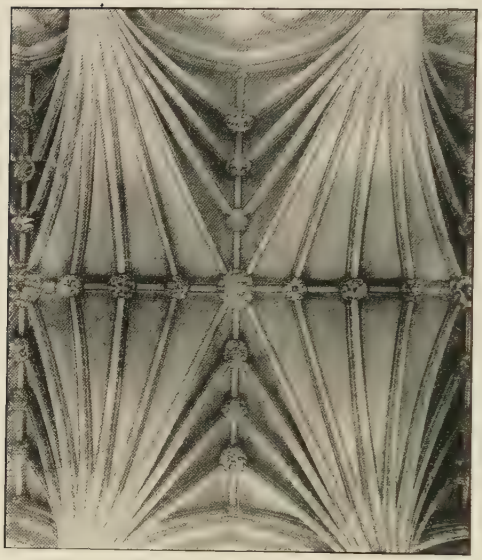

Fig. 2.

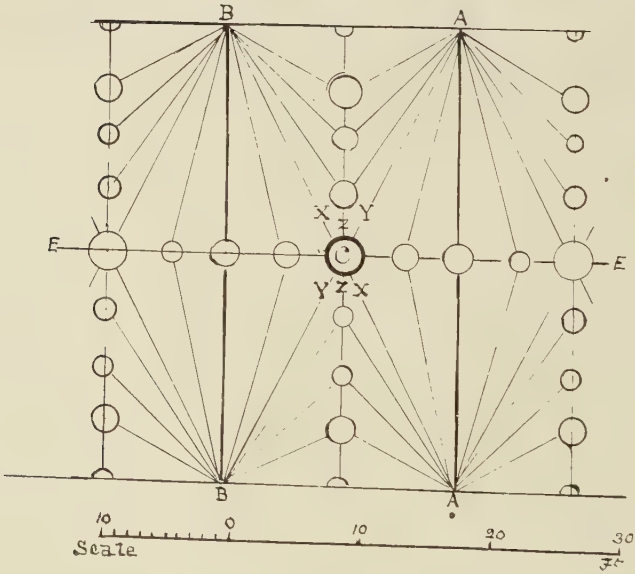

Fig. 3.

of Exeter choir: the north being at the top of the page. Where a single arch crosses the central rib (E, E), or ridge, of the vault, as at AA, BB, the boss is, strictly speaking, only a keystone to the arch; and the sides on which it fits in to the ridge-rib will be a straight joint; but where several arches intersect—as at C—the boss has to hold out its helping hands to each arch, with a surface so cut as to receive each rib at its own particular angle. At C there are three arches, X, Y, Z, and the boss must therefore offer six sides suitably cut to receive and wedge firmly the topmost voussoirs of the ribs. In many of our illustrations, notably among the bosses of the choir vaulting, the short arms, or shoulders, on which the several ribs neatly and exactly fit, can be plainly seen stretching out beyond the carved centre of the stone. The boss with its short projecting arms is, therefore, in reality a multiplex keystone, cut out of one block of stone; and no small skill was required to prepare this very responsible member so that when it was put in place it should be an exact fit in all directions.

Thus the Gothic architects had not merely the skill necessary for the accomplishment of this, as of other far more wonderful feats of masonry: they had in addition a sound artistic ideal which led them to the practical principle that decoration found its most appropriate and telling place where it emphasized some important point of construction. Where a great keystone was an essential structural feature, they saw that it also afforded fitting field for special decoration.

The boss, as already noted, first appears in the later Norman work; but in this period it is neither a prominent feature nor much decorated. In the Early English style it is usually sculptured with the characteristic foliage of the period, occasionally with small figures and animals introduced. In the Decorated style it acquires prominence and importance as an ornament. Foliage, masks, figures, symbols, sometimes whole scenes are used; and occasionally shields with armorial bearings—a type of ornamentation which became very general in Perpendicular work.

Looking at the rough, uncarved back of a boss—as one may in walking over some vaultings, it is the skill and

mind of the builder as engineer that one admires.* From the floor of the church, where the whole span presents itself as one noble work of art, the thought of the wonderful planning skill is almost lost in the overpowering sense of beauty. We have, in these minor details, works of art, worthy of close, individual study that fill one's mind with reverent admiration for the designers and workers of past days.

Not that all, even of the Exeter bosses, are beautiful. Some subjects are intentionally grotesque; some embody the passing passions or prejudices of the time; and of some it is very difficult now to decide what were the legends, ideas, or emotions which originally suggested them.

Although much of the stone-carving in churches of this period was executed *in situ*, it was not so with the bosses. In the position they were intended to occupy the sculptor's work would have been almost impossible: they were therefore carved in the workshop, but gilded and coloured after being fitted into their final places. The result of this is sometimes disadvantageous; as where figures and faces are turned upwards at too great an angle to be seen from below. Examples of this will occur in our illustrations.

In the Fabric Rolls† of the Cathedral it is recorded that the payment for carving the great ridge bosses of the choir was five shillings each: six bosses for the aisles are charged in the same account three-and-sixpence each for carving. The estimates of money-value for this period are very uncertain, but this probably indicates that the smaller bosses cost from £2 10s. to £3 10s. each for carving, and the larger ones from four to five pounds each.

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*In the western part of the nave at Westminster Abbey, on the horizontal backs of the bosses may still be seen, carefully drawn or lightly incised, the plan of the centre and side lines of the ribs of the vaulting which intersect at these points; showing the care with which these keystones had to be set out in order to perform their functions accurately. SIR GILBERT SCOTT mentions in his *Lectures on Mediaeval Architecture* that he found the same method pursued on the backs of the bosses in the more complex lierne vault of the eastern limb of Ely. In Exeter there is no opportunity of examining the bosses on that side, as the backs of the vaults are concreted over.

†Quoted in FREEMAN'S *Exeter Cathedral*, 1888 Ed., p. 123.

The choir bosses are specially mentioned in the Fabric Rolls as being of Portland stone. The suitability of this material and the facilities for its carriage by water make it probable that it was used for most if not all of the bosses. Their number is very considerable, as a glance at the accompanying plan will show. For the purpose of cataloguing them it is convenient to distinguish between the bosses proper and those smaller segments of bosses which occur at the junctions of ribs and window-mouldings, or of ribs and crossings; the latter being referred to, generically, as half-bosses. The following table is some guide to their distribution:—

	Bosses.	Half-bosses.
Lady Chapel	23	8
Chapels of SS. Gabriel and Mary Magdalen	10	8
Ambulatory	12	7
Choir Aisles	16	2
Chapels of SS. Andrew and James ...	4	—
Choir	76	17
Nave	81	17
Nave Aisles	70	56
Transepts	32	16
Chapels of SS. Paul and John ...	30	12
S. Radegunde's Chapel	1	—
North Porch	1	—
West Door	7	—
South-West Porch	5	—
Chapel of S. Edmund	6	4

A total of 374 large bosses and 147 half-bosses. There are also small bosses under the choir-screen arranged in four sets of 9 bosses and four halves each. If these be included we must add 36 bosses and 16 half-bosses. The total of carved bosses or portions of bosses will then be altogether 573.

In size they vary considerably: the large ridge-bosses are from two-and-a-half to three feet in diameter, the larger size being usually employed to mark the centres of the bays. In the aisles the average diameter is about two feet, those in the nave aisles are many of them smaller and also those in the transeptal chapels and western entrances. Many of the bosses under the choir-screen are not more than six inches in diameter.

The subjects treated will be indicated in the course of this work, but it will be useful to note that they fall into three main groups, viz. :—

(1) The purely decorative. This class is by far the most numerous and consists chiefly of arrangements of flowers, fruit and foliage, sometimes with small figures introduced.

(2) The pictorial. Including many portraits, also scenes and scriptural incidents.

(3) The symbolic. In this group must be included also the grotesque. Probably most of the subjects which appear to us to be merely grotesque had, at the time of their employment, a symbolic meaning, or referred to some legend or tradition 'understanded of the people.'

We find these three classes persisting throughout all the periods during which the Cathedral was in process of building.

As the vaults were almost the last part of the structure to be erected, the bosses naturally show the work of their period in its full maturity. The earliest are those in the Lady Chapel and the adjoining Chapels of S. Mary Magdalen and S. Gabriel. There are entries in the Fabric Rolls, as resumed in Bitton's time in 1301, for Silverton stone used in the web of the vaulting, and for gold, silver and other colours for painting the vault.* The latest, those of the six western bays of the nave and its aisles, must have been in position about 1338, when Grandisson issued the order for oak timbers for the roofing of the nave.† Thus some forty years covers the whole period of art they represent: a period (the earlier half of the fourteenth century) in which stone-carving reached the high-water mark of excellence in England.

Professor Lethaby‡ says 'The Rolls show that at Exeter, exactly as at Westminster Abbey, building was carried on under the joint charge of a Master of Accounts and a

* FREEMAN, *Exeter Cathedral*, 1888 Ed., pp. 120-1.

† Ibid., pp. 135-6.

‡ *How Exeter Cathedral was Built*, by W. R. LETHABY, in *The Architectural Review*, March and May, 1903. See also OLIVER'S *History*, pp. 392f.

Master of Masonry.' This latter was, about the years 1299 and onwards, one Master Roger, who is mentioned as 'custos novi operis,' with his foreman, Richard Streme, and nine or ten other masons mentioned by name.

A very strong tendency has been shown by archaeologists of a former day to attribute much of the best architectural work in England, especially the execution of detail, to foreigners. Without ignoring the fact that foreign influences were constantly imported into England from many sources, we may safely claim to have had at this time carvers, 'marblers,' 'imaginators,' and other craftsmen who were unquestionably of home growth. The French form of their names is often merely the survival of Norman family names, introduced, some of them, as far back as Edward the Confessor's reign. To describe the men who bore these names in 1300 as other than Englishmen would be a strange anachronism. Thus, among the Exeter stone-carvers was William of Montacute, or 'de Montacute' as he is sometimes described, who was responsible for the eight exquisite vaulting-shaft corbels of the presbytery, and the bosses in the roof of the same. It has been inferred from his name that he was brought over from France to do the work. But, as Professor Lethaby points out in the articles already referred to, Montacute is a property situated close to Ham Hill in Somerset. Later, in 1324, the Rolls make mention of payment to a London statuary for images for the great screen; and the marble work of the same, including the beautiful oak-foliage carving in the spandrels, was done by William Cannon of Corfe—one of the famous 'Corfe marblers.' Before that 'John of Corfe' is mentioned as being paid for mason's work on the main piers of the presbytery. From the whole series of the records we may conclude that the work of the Cathedral (with the exception of some of the glazing) was done by Englishmen.

CHAPTER II.

The Bosses of the Lady Chapel; Chapels of SS. Mary Magdalen and Gabriel; the Ambulatory; and the Easternmost Bosses of the Choir Aisles.

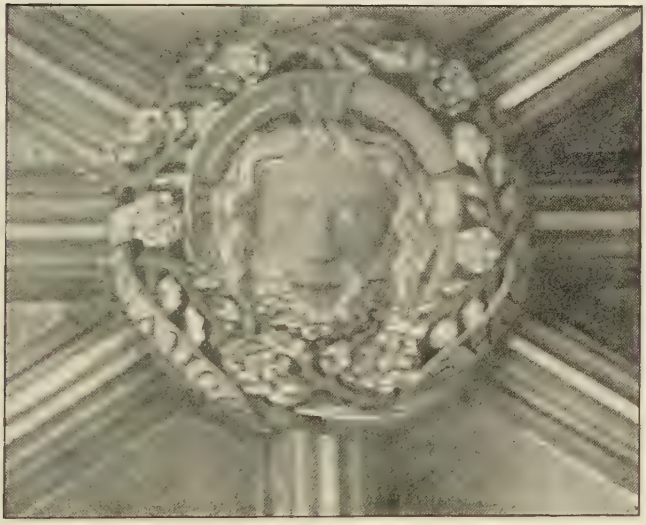
In the plan of the vaulting in this book the bosses have been numbered consecutively, commencing with the easternmost boss of the Lady Chapel and finishing with the western porches. Numbers, however, have only been assigned to complete bosses, the half-bosses at the extremities of the ridges being referred to when necessary by the number of the boss nearest to them with the letter 'a' added. As these half-bosses are nearly all of them foliage-subjects, of style and design very similar to the larger bosses, there would be no real gain in including them all in our enumeration. The numbers attached to the bosses in the illustrations will therefore enable the reader to locate them readily by a reference to the key-plan.

The bosses of the Lady Chapel and of the adjoining Chapels of SS. Mary Magdalen and Gabriel form a convenient starting-point. They are in the easternmost limb of the fabric, and are also the earliest in date. For these vaults to have been ready for painting in 1301 (*vide supra*, p. 10) the carving of the bosses must have been in hand probably as early as 1299, and they reflect very faithfully the characteristics of their date.

Over the east window is a half-boss (1a) of foliage, similar in character to others along the ridge which may be more easily examined.

The next boss (No. 1) is one of a set of five bosses which must be considered together (Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7). They form a composition which was a favourite from the

earliest times of Christian art—Our Lord, surrounded by the symbols of the Four Evangelists. These symbolic groups occur very frequently in the early Italian churches and basilicas, and the most usual position is over the altar at the eastern end—much as they are here. Sometimes the symbols of the evangelists were placed at the four corners of the ceiling and Our Lord alone over the altar. Here the central ridge-boss in the place of honour over the altar is a Christ in Majesty (No. 2). The face is of a type which appears to have been adopted as significant of dignity and absence of human passion: a certain fixity and sternness of expression is given to it. It is surrounded by a



No. 2.

nimbus of unusual form. Owing to the difficulty of the depth required, it is more like a frame than a nimbus; but it is tri-radiate as the nimbus always is in representations of the Divine Persons after the sixth century. Encircling the whole is a wreath of roses; a naturalistic rendering of the flower afterwards conventionalized as the 'Tudor rose.' Flowers are rarely used as symbols, but frequently express attributes or qualities of persons. Here the rose is probably

in signification of the Rose of Sharon, the emblem of incorruption. The scroll beneath the face is inscribed PASTOR BONVS, but owing to the way in which it is folded some of the letters are not visible from below.* It is a rather remarkable coincidence that in MISS TWINING'S book on *Symbols and Emblems of Christian Art* (under 'Nimbus') a fifth century mosaic at Ravenna is quoted which depicts the Good Shepherd. Miss Twining remarks that it is an unusual subject outside of the catacombs. The type of face, and especially the arrangement of the beard, is very similar to this boss.

The symbols of the four evangelists occur in all periods and all styles of art. They were derived from the 'living creatures' described in the Apocalypse (iv, 6ff), and often amplified from the account given by Ezekiel (i, 10; x, 14). The description given in the Apocalypse, however, was the usual model in the Western church. Whilst the symbols were sometimes variously identified (*e.g.* S. Augustine considers the Lion to be symbolic of S. Matthew and the Angel of S. Mark), S. Jerome's interpretation was the one most widely accepted, and it is the one followed by the sculptors here. The Angel, or Man, is the sign of S. Matthew, who began to write as of a man the book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the Son of David; it is therefore especially symbolic of the Incarnation. The Lion is the symbol of S. Mark, in whose Gospel is heard the voice of the Lion roaring in the desert, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord;' this is also the Gospel of the Resurrection, of which the Lion is symbolic (see later bosses). The Ox, or the Calf, symbolizes S. Luke, who commences his history from the priest Zacharias; it is also the symbol of Sacrifice, or the Passion. The Eagle typifies S. John, who, having taken wings, hastens to loftier things and speaks of the incarnate Word of God; his symbol is also emblematic of the Ascension. Many other secondary explanations are given, according to the pious fancies of the Early Fathers.

* Mr. Cotton, in the MS. which we have already referred to, wrongly describes the lettering as 'Noster Dominus.'

The Eagle of S. John (No. 1) is to the east of Our Lord. This position was at once a recognition of the character of the 'right spiritual Gospel' and of the Eagle soaring towards the sun as a type of immortality. The symbol has a graceful flower-wreath of wild hyacinth or bluebell (*Scilla nutans*; not the harebell—*campanula rotundifolia*)—which is known in Scotland as the blue-

No. 1.

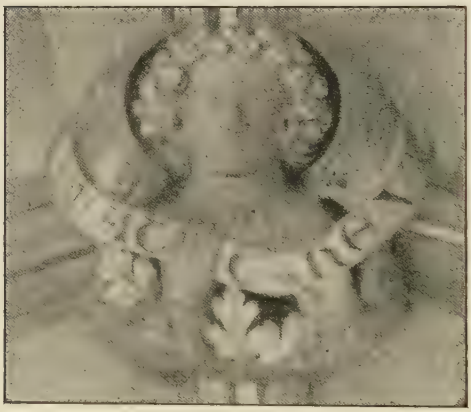
bell) which is very uncommon. The scroll is inscribed S. IOHANNES: here again only part of the lettering can be read from the floor.

The Calf of S. Luke (No. 4) is north of the central head of Christ, and the Lion of S. Mark (No. 5) is on the south. According to Ezekiel, the Lion should be on the right, and the Ox on the left; but these positions vary according to the interpretation put on the terms 'right' and

No. 4.

'left.' Here they are correct from the observer's point of view, but incorrect relatively to the central head. The carvers have given a considerable amount of human expression to the beasts; this is characteristic of all early animal carving. There is no foliage on the Calf-boss, but the Lion has a setting of vine-branches and leaves, which recurs in the symbol of S. Matthew, and is usually emblematic of the Church. The scroll of No. 4, which is inscribed S. LVCAS, is almost unreadable from the floor. On No. 5, S. MARCVS is plainly visible.

No. 5.



No. 7.

The Angel (No. 7), symbolic of S. Matthew, has a face of the same type as No. 2, and holds in his hands a scroll bearing the Evangelist's name, S. MATTHEVS.

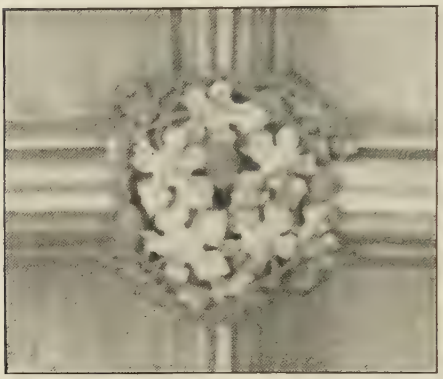
The symbols and foliage in all these bosses are picked out in gold, whilst the human faces are coloured a dull, dark red.

North of S. Luke's symbol is a boss (No. 3) coloured dark-green and picked out with gold. It depicts four monstrous heads of coiled-up creatures with short fore-paws and bat-like wings. The snouts of three of them meet by the crest of the fourth: the expression of all is evil and watchful, but quiescent. One is tempted to recall the mediaeval fancy, recorded in the metrical *Life of S. Hugh*, that the north is the quarter where evil lurks ever on the watch: but we shall find in other parts of the Cathedral that these strange designs of evil suggestiveness are to be found on the south as well as on the north. Perhaps the builder contented himself with a general admonition as to 'the devil lurking for his prey.'

No. 3.

The half-boss at No. 3a is an arrangement of leaves. No. 6 at the south extremity of the ridge is also coloured dark-green relieved with gold. It is an arrangement of foliage, of thick twisted stems and leaves deeply puckered and slightly serrated—evidently newly-unfolded beech leaves; a small four-rayed floweret, perhaps intended for an open burr, is also worked into the design. Because they put forth life and vigour every spring, trees and foliage generally are typical of the resurrection and of immortality. It may be that this boss has some such special significance in antithesis to No. 3. It has also been suggested that the beech is placed here, next to the symbols of the four writers of the Gospel story, because the earliest runes were written on beechen boards, whence came the Anglo-Saxon '*boc*' or 'book.'

No. 8, immediately west of S. Matthew's symbol, is a good example of the purely decorative class, to which several of the bosses immediately succeeding it also belong. The subject here chosen is the vine; in No. 9 it is the oakleaf; and in the larger central boss, No. 10, the maple. The free and graceful foliage of these bosses has much advanced in naturalism from the conventional, though beautiful, forms of the Early English 'stiff-leaf' period. In No. 10 the cordate leaves, pendulous racemes and fruit capsules are rendered with an admirable accuracy and spirit. The whole treatment is naturalistic: in arrangement and representation there is no trace of that formalism which heralded the advent of the pure Decorated, and all too soon prefigured its decay.



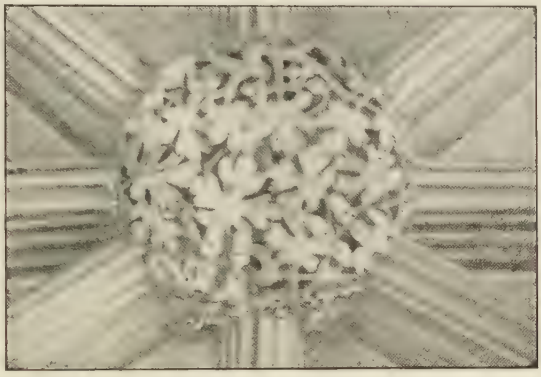
No. 8.

No. 9.

Exeter is replete with examples of this excellent period of stone sculpture; here, in the Lady Chapel, they may be seen coloured and gilded, but in other parts of the building are examples in plain stone.

Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and the half-bosses at 6a,

11a, 14a, 19a, 22a and 23a are all instances of various types and arrangements of foliage belonging to the same date and style.



No. 10.

No. 17 introduces a different class of subject. A couching bull, busily licking his shoulder, forms one side of the boss; on the other a cow suckles her calf, licking his hind-quarter the while. The calf forms the centre and stands on its parents' legs. The animals are variously coloured, the red tongues of the bull and cow being very visible when the lighting is good. The mastery and free treatment of the animal forms and characteristics is very noteworthy; the excess of human expression is mainly the result of the symbolism which up to this period almost entirely dominated ecclesiastical sculpture. Under its sway character and expression other than that natural

No. 17.

to them is found in the representation of animals even when not distinctively used as symbols. The ox has, of course, its symbolic purport—patience and gentleness; this little family group very possibly is intended to inculcate the virtue of gentleness, for in the art which presents it and at the period of its execution it would be exceptional to find such a scene free from the influence of symbolism.

As the period of sculpture with which we are concerned illustrates so largely the 'parting of the ways' in this matter of symbolism, it may clear away some discussion in dealing with other subjects if we here note down a few general considerations.

In the period immediately preceding the vaulting of Exeter Cathedral symbolic interpretations were un oubtedly strained beyond their proper limits. In the *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* of DURANDUS (*circa* 1290) a significance is assigned to the various parts of a church and made out to govern their form which there is no reason to suppose their actual designers or builders ever had in mind. For instance, that 'the capitals of the piers are the opinions of the bishops and doctors, and their ornaments are the words of sacred scripture.' It will be fairly evident that no such significance was considered during the execution of many capitals that come readily to mind where a fox chasing a goose, or a man beating his wife, or some other equally domestic incident supplies the sculptor's motive. To take another example. It is stated in the metrical *Life of S. Hugh* (of Lincoln) that the whiteness of the stone is made to symbolize 'the chaste and wise,' or modesty; the smoothness of the marble, guilelessness; its splendour, good conduct; and its darkness, work! On the other hand, there is now a somewhat exaggerated tendency to eliminate symbolism in wholesale fashion from the interpretation of mediaeval art—a great reaction from the credulous spirit of the first half of the nineteenth century as shown in such works as the *Essay on Symbolism* by the REV. J. M. NEALE and the REV. B. WEBB, prefixed to their translation of Durandus (1842). In our opinion, the correct view is that in actual building and in constructive principles symbolism is practically absent. Doors were not inserted because Our Lord said 'I am the door,' but because they are a necessity of the building;

afterwards it may well be that Our Lord's parabolic use of the door led to special emphasis of its decoration. But plans and structural forms of churches were almost invariably dictated by constructive or ritual requirements; and to these two factors we can nearly always trace such architectural developments as are noticeable between one period and another.

When we come to decoration, however, and its various styles and developments, there is ample field for the full sway of symbolism. In all the decorative features of church architecture we may safely allow it a very large influence. This influence it exercised subject to the inevitable laws of change, action setting up reaction in its turn, conventionalized forms of expression yielding to naturalistic tendencies, naturalism degenerating after a while into a newer conventional expression.

In very early Christian times symbolism assumed serious proportions. When signs agreed upon were necessary to avoid the perils attendant upon written or graven words it reigned supreme. Of this the Roman catacombs furnish abundant proofs. It survived in much corrupted and elaborated forms in the works of many mediaeval writers and illuminators. Manuscripts emanating from the monasteries teemed with symbolism, animal, floral, numerical; sometimes easily deducible, sometimes purely arbitrary. Inevitably it entered largely into the designs of carvers and sculptors of the same period, and in such works as the adornment of a great vault like this of Exeter suitable opportunity was afforded for its exercise.

Moral lessons and religious doctrines were taught in this way: windows and sculptures became the Bible of the unlettered majority. At the same time, in less honourable parts of the fabric (as on *subsellia*, or misericords) subjects were often taken from imaginative monkish literature such as the bestiaries—books of illustrated natural (or, more often, *un*-natural) history—which were greatly quoted and copied, or the quaint cycle of mediaeval romances. In subjects such as these there is often less moral teaching and more satire, frequently verging on questionable and malevolent caricature.

However, in the bosses which star the vault it is usually for the higher class of interpretations that we may look. Soaring heavenward, they direct the thoughts of the worshipper to the excellence of virtue, or warn him against the power of lurking evil.

To resume the examination of the vault of the Lady Chapel after this somewhat lengthy digression—which is, however, necessary to our appreciation of the motives of its sculptors—No. 18 is composed of four human heads arranged at the cardinal points of the boss. The variety of expression imparted to these faces is ample proof of the carver's mastery of his art, when not limited by conventional types of expression conveying the august nature of his subject (contrast in this respect with No. 18, Nos. 2 and 7). The heads east and west are male, north and south, female. To the latter, arched eyebrows and a softly-curved mouth are assigned, whilst the former have, in contrast, straight eyebrows and firm upper lips: the racial type is the same in all four. The female head to the north has a kerchief only for covering; that on the south has a kerchief brought round under the chin, forming a wimple. Both types of headgear were worn throughout the thirteenth century. The heads are wreathed in vine-stems with foliage and fruit. In the symbolism of numbers four is usually the world-number, and the heads may be simply typical of the worshipping church on earth, of which the vine is also emblematic.

No. 18.

No. 19 has four animal heads, possibly of otters, pointing to the centre, each bearing in its mouth a fish whose body curves backward around the head. This boss is on the northern ridge, and it may well be supposed that under the familiar emblem of the fish, which was from very early times the special sign of the Christian believer (though borrowed from the Greeks, who carved it on tombs because it was supposed to bear the soul of the deceased across the sea to the islands of the blest), there is a warning of the readiness of Satan to make the faithful his prey. Evans, in *Animal Symbolism in Ecclesiastical Architecture* (p. 133), says 'the Greek word for otter, *enhydris*, signifies also water-snake, and this ambiguity has caused it to be confounded with the hydra, whose many heads, growing again as soon as they are lopped off, symbolize the fearfully prolific and ineradicable nature of original sin. For this reason the otter in the Waldensian *Physiologus* becomes the type of the devil, who puts on cunning disguises in order to insinuate himself into the heart of man and to compass his destruction.' This boss, then, might well symbolize the devil devouring the Christian. On the other hand, it may be only a proof of the growing disregard of symbolism, an example of unfettered artistic design prompted by familiarity with the world of nature.

No. 19.

No. 20.

Nos. 20, 21 and 22 are all masks of male heads. No. 20, on the north, is a mask of sinister cast. From its open mouth issue the stems of branching foliage which form a

wreath for the whole countenance. It is a type of which we shall have something more to say in considering the Choir vault. Nos. 21 and 22 face north and south respectively; the headgear of the former is somewhat incongruous to modern eyes, resembling nothing so much as a schoolboy's cap with little button on the top and with the peak turned back; the latter's hair is confined by a fillet-like band of cloth tied in a knot on the left of the head—a fashion repeated elsewhere in the masks among the bosses. Both have the long hair, parted in the middle, and beards which began to be worn in Henry I's reign and continued fashionable for over two hundred years. On the tomb of Edward III in Westminster Abbey are bronze statuettes of the Black Prince, Lionel, Duke of Clarence and others of his children; the men's figures exhibit precisely similar fillets and testify to the fashionableness of the long hair and beards. Mr. Cotton, whose artist has assigned to No. 21 a curious hard hat, somewhat naively suggests that they are intended as satires upon the fashions of the period. They are probably contemporary portraits, or caricatures rather, of long-forgotten folk.

No. 21.

No. 22.

No. 23, which is hard by the entrance to the Lady Chapel, exhibits two large palmatisect leaves, springing on either side from under a dark, long animal's body, which sprawls across the boss. Its four legs are spread out on either side, and its head, which is at the western end, is turned at an acute angle to its body. Four large birds, with outspread wings are placed, two at either end. The beast has seized one in

its mouth and another seems to be biting at the beast's ear: the two at the other end are biting angrily at its tail, which curves back over the creature in a bushy manner. It is perhaps intended for a fox engaged in a combat with geese, the former being a favourite type of the wiles and cunning of evil, the geese portraying the faithful whom he is endeavouring to destroy. The apparent lack of a sense of humour which allowed these early artists to so symbolize the true Christian under a form that inevitably suggests ridicule to our minds is very characteristic of the time.

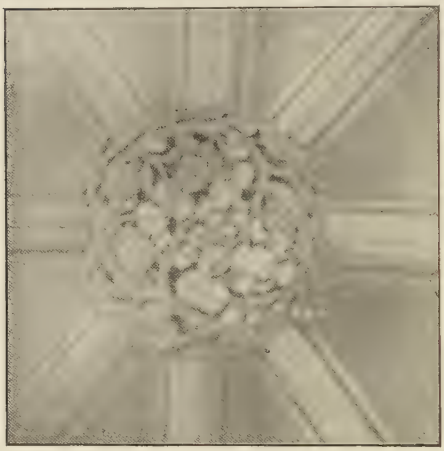
No. 23.

On one of the voussoirs over the south entrance to the old Norman Church at Alne in Yorkshire a fox, labelled VVLPIS, is depicted feigning death in order to make prey of two geese which have approached to inspect him. Whilst the beast-epos of Reineke Fuchs belongs mainly to a later period, when satire entered largely into these decorations, the earlier symbolism of the fox, as taught by *Physiologus*, is occasionally to be found.

No. 25.

In the two chapels of S. Mary Magdalen and S. Gabriel, which flank the Lady Chapel and are contemporary with it, are similarly

richly-coloured vaults. Sir Gilbert Scott notes that the star-sprinkled spaces are a faithful restoration of the original colouring, but the patterns on the ribs are 'foolish additions.'* Each has five bosses and four half-bosses, their numbers being from 24 to 33, and all are examples of foliage. The centre boss in each chapel is illustrated as typical. That in S. Mary Magdalen's (No. 25) is a beautiful specimen of the vine—emblematic of the Church—with a half-concealed dragon coiled among its foliage and biting at the main stem. It is a parable of the efforts of Satan to destroy the growth and fruitfulness of the Church. The centre in S. Gabriel's chapel (No. 30) is a dainty wreath of roses, whose pristine grace and delicacy suffer some eclipse from the dark paint and heavy gilding. The flower, the early Provence rose, has a double row of petals like those which form the wreath in No. 2. It is the lineal ancestor of the homely cabbage-rose of to-day. Here the graceful sprays accommodate themselves spontaneously to the necessary circular form, and the skill and apparent ease with which the whole is designed and executed make it a masterpiece of purely naturalistic design.



No 30.

The low vaulting of the ambulatory immediately behind the high altar enables the observer to make easy acquaintance with a very fine collection of foliage-bosses (Nos. 34-45) in pure stone-work, which have every indication of being all the work of the same hand, but distinctly different to the bosses of the Lady Chapel and its flanking chapels in conception and execution. The unusual arrangement of the vaulting

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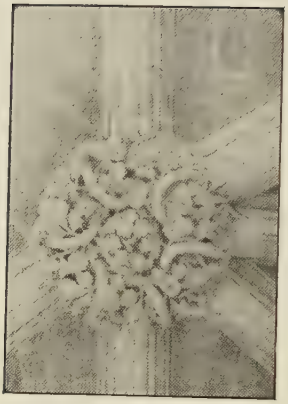
*See Mr. Lethaby's articles, referred to on p. 10.

ribs, the result of an unequal number of sources on the two sides, is also noteworthy.

In some of these bosses there is an evident tendency to geometrical arrangement; this is partly a survival of some conventionalisms in the treatment of foliage, and partly due, no doubt, to the style and taste of the individual carver whose work serves to differentiate the ambulatory from its surroundings. Sir Gilbert Scott in *Gleanings from Westminster Abbey* (p. 63), speaking of the tomb of Edmund, Earl of Lancaster (brother of Edward I) in Westminster Abbey, says, 'These works occupy the middle position between the conventional foliage of the earlier and the almost equally conventional foliage of the later division of our architecture. It is, in fact, a mistake to call the foliage even of the later parts of the Decorated style *natural*. The use of really natural foliage is very seldom found after the end of the thirteenth and the few earliest years of the fourteenth century, and marks, if I may say so, the resting place between the conventionalism of *approach* and the conventionalism of *departure*, from nature; the conventionalism of strength and of weakness—of vigour and of lassitude.' This criticism of Sir Gilbert Scott's may well be borne in mind in the consideration of the Exeter foliage bosses generally, and may save us from the error of too readily assigning a later date to decorations simply because they show signs of departure from the purely naturalistic treatment.

In No. 38 two dragons with outspread wings and long necks sprawl across the foliage of the vine. This is another rendering of the struggle between good and evil influences which engaged the sculptor of the centre boss of S. Mary Magdalen's Chapel (No. 26).

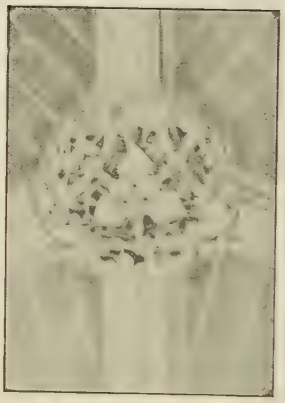
No. 39 is a quaint device of poplar foliage with four squirrels half-hidden in the leaves. The animals are disproportionately small: this difficulty of their representation was evidently realised by the carver, and in consequence the squirrels are little more than flat outline reliefs. The squirrel, by an easy transition from the parabolic use made of it by Buddhists, was symbolic of the constant strivings of the Holy Spirit, and is so employed in carvings in Ely Cathedral. (See Evans, *Animal Symbolism*, p. 223).



No. 37.

No. 38.

No. 39.



No. 40.

The geometrical type of design is seen at its best in No. 37, which is a pleasing arrangement of hawthorn flowers and foliage. A central spray is surrounded by a regular circle of leaves and a wide outer wreath of the same plant. Across the outer wreath are six curved, radiating stripes, regularly placed, which a closer examination reveals as giant caterpillars with dragon-like heads. It is apparently a variation of the typical contrast between good and evil.

No. 42.

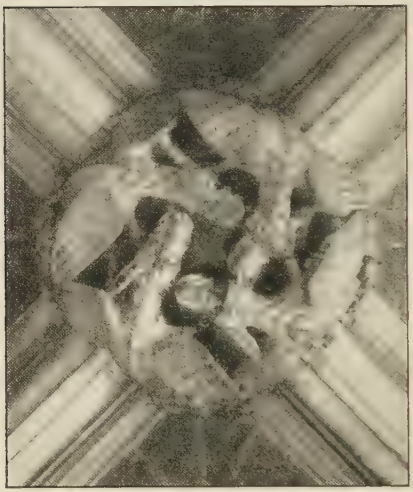
In Nos. 40 and 42 we have further examples of this geometrical treatment of foliage, the triangle and the circle supplying their respective motives. The former is a well-known Trinitarian emblem, borrowed originally from Egyptian symbolism; the latter is significant of eternity and immortality.

No. 45.

Our last illustration of this set of bosses, No. 45, differs considerably in its conception and execution from the rest. Enwreathed in maple foliage (which may be profitably compared with No. 10) is a fox, seizing a thrush which is dipping its beak into one of the flowers. Small birds are often used to typify the worshippers of the church, especially such as were attached to any particular building. This was in reference to Ps. lxxxiv, 3 ('Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house.') The fox, as we have already

seen, was typical of the cunning of Satan (*vide supra* p. 25). But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when associations of secular builders, freemasons and the like, largely supplanted the religious fraternities, a satirical tendency in ornamentation began to exhibit itself. Some of its earliest manifestations were an expression of the growing dissensions between the secular clergy and the monastic orders. In the earliest examples the fox was a favourite caricature of the friar.

The Mayor's Court Rolls of Exeter and the Chapter Archives for the years 1301-5 furnish evidence of a very bitter dispute which took place between the cathedral clergy and the Dominicans (the Black Friars) who had a monastery where Bedford Circus now stands, over the obsequies of Sir Henry Ralegh de Ralegh. It is possible that this boss, which must have been executed somewhere about that time, perpetuates the memory of this ancient feud.



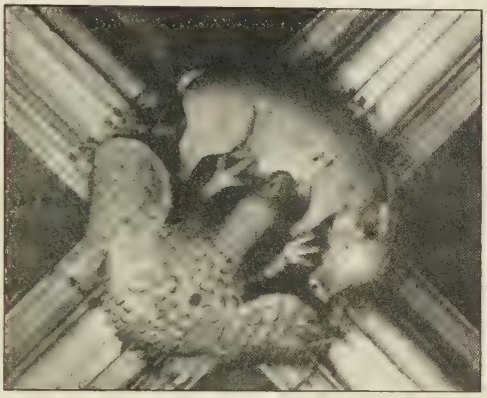
No. 122.

The rest of the ambulatory bosses are simply good foliage designs and do not call for special remark beyond the fact that Nos. 43 and 44 are arrangements of vine-leaves whose symbolism has already been noted.

It will be convenient to include in this chapter the two easternmost bosses of the choir aisles, Nos. 122 and 130, which differ, not only from the bosses of the ambulatory, but also from the other bosses of the aisles in style. No. 122 is an interesting variant of the frequent groups of four dragons, symbolical of evil; here, again, they are on the north. The restlessness of evil is portrayed by showing each as busy biting his neighbour's ear. They are carved in very

bold relief so that they stand out some distance from the background of the keystone. Mr. Cotton describes them as 'newts,' and Mr. Hewett as 'birds!'

No. 130 has been erroneously described as a vampire sucking the blood of a pig. The mediaeval vampire was as a rule a monster in human shape; zoologically it is a species of bat. There are certainly no vampire characteristics in the bird of prey which is here shown biting at a pig, possibly attempting to carry it away. Probably an eagle is intended; the beak is not exactly satisfactory, but Aristotle stated that the upper beak of very old eagles grows so long that it prevents them from eating, and a twelfth century version of *Physiologus* explained that to remedy this evil the eagle breaks off the superfluous beak on a stone. This may account for its unusual form here. As the hog is not infrequently used to denote one of the forms in which Satan appears, the composition may be intended to symbolize the Saviour's conquest of evil consummated in the Ascension.



No. 130.

CHAPTER III.

The Bosses of the Presbytery and its Aisles; and of the Chapels of SS. Andrew and James.

There is no record to show what order was followed in the vaulting of the choir and its aisles, though the whole of the work is generally assigned to Bitton's episcopate, which lasted from 1292 to 1307. It is quite probable that the work of the high vault and of the choir aisles was carried out simultaneously. Of one thing there are distinct evidences; that the four bays of the presbytery, both in the high vault and in the vaults of the aisles, were finished before the three western bays were begun. These evidences are found chiefly in the treatment of the foliage carvings and in the changes which take place in the nature of the subjects of the sculptures.

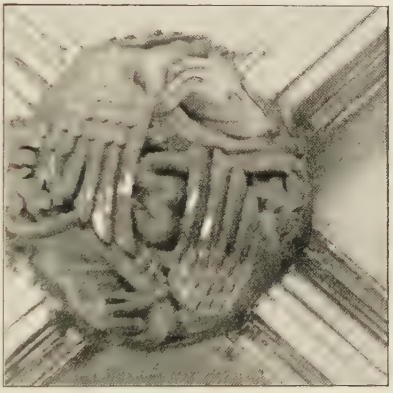
As the stone-vaulting of a church was not usually executed until after the construction of the roof,* there were no reasons, save convenience, why one part should take precedence of another. In the records of the building of the later part of the nave of Westminster Abbey it is shown that the side aisles were roofed in the reign of Henry V, but the nave was left unroofed until Edward IV's time; subsequently the vaulting of both nave and aisles was carried out in portions just as was convenient. In Exeter it seems probable that the four eastern bays of the side aisles was the portion taken in hand after the completion of the retrochoir, as the work of these respective parts is very closely allied. In the adjoining high-vault there is undoubtedly some advance in style noticeable.

Further, the Fabric Roll for 1304 records the payment of Walter le Verrouer for the actual glazing of the east window and the clerestory windows of these four bays; the obvious conclusion is that the vaulting of this portion was

* Cf. Willis, *Architectural History of York Cathedral*, p. 29.

then finished, for such work would imperil the glass of the upper windows, and it is improbable that it was going on at the same time. The glazing of the clerestory windows of the three western bays of the choir is recorded some six or seven years later (see Fabric Roll, 1310-11, quoted FREEMAN'S *Exeter Cathedral*, note 40) under Stapeldon, and this doubtless marks approximately the date of the completion of that section of the choir vaulting.

Our illustrations will follow this assumed order, taking first the four aisle bays flanking the presbytery with the transeptal chapels and then the corresponding bays of the high vault, leaving the three western bays of both high vault and aisles for separate consideration as a distinct stage of the work.



No. 124.

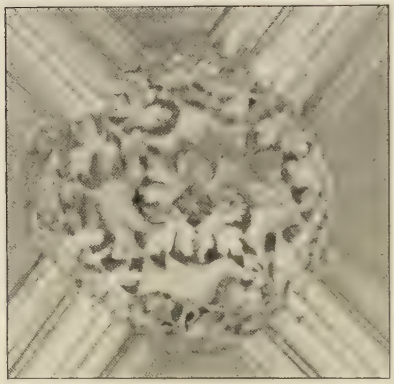
Throughout the choir aisles, as in the crossing bays illustrated on pp. 30 and 31, simple quadripartite vaulting is employed, and therefore each bay contains but one boss.

There is the same mixture of subjects from foliage and from animal life that we have seen in the Lady Chapel, and there is no special method in their sequence.

Foliage predominates; it is the principal theme in Nos. 123, 125 and 126 on the north side, and is of exactly the same character as that of the high vault. Animal life as represented in No. 124 is of that strange and monstrous order already illustrated. These draconic creatures are of such frequent recurrence that in this particular case it may be sufficient to accept the general conclusion that the weird monsters depicted are symbolic of evil and to refer the reader to our former interpretations of similar subjects for the deeper meanings which so often underlie this type of symbolism. We need to know the beliefs and legends of the time before it is possible to express a just opinion as to the propriety

of their introduction into mediaeval work, just as much as we must know classical mythology to appreciate the ornament of an Etruscan vase.

As a contrast to the monstrous forms of No. 124, in No. 125 is a favourite fourteenth century theme—birds amid foliage. Thrushes are here innocently busy feeding on the berries of the hawthorn. Birds were frequently introduced in carving by the ancient sculptors, partly, perhaps, because of their appropriateness in foliage subjects. Our Lord's references to the 'fowls of the air' and, as we have already noted, the mention made of them in the Psalms (cf. Ps. civ, 16, 17; and especially Ps. lxxxiv, 3) also influenced their depiction. This is not so much symbolism as the actual rendering of scriptural truth; but it becomes symbolical of the wider truth that the House of God is a refuge for the lowly and a home for the innocent and pure. From this elementary interpretation more complicated symbolism was developed. Birds were used as emblems of the redeemed souls of the righteous released from the body; a tree in fruit symbolized the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven; so that the composition very possibly sets forth the promise that the souls of the righteous after this life shall feast upon the everlasting joys of heaven.



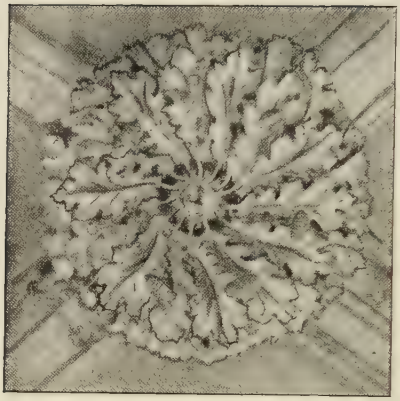
No. 125.

Whether charged with this cheering message or merely designed as a piece of realistic decoration, this boss is an example of a point which has already been discussed, viz., the disregard in the arrangement of the Exeter bosses of any definite apportionment of evil and good subjects to the north and south sides of the church respectively, although some writers have stated that this principle governs their position in mediaeval buildings generally (see p. 17).

In the south choir aisle we find an even more emphatic example of this. After a very fine decorative study of roses, of the same type as No. 30 in S. Gabriel's Chapel, in No. 131, we come, in No. 132, to an unpleasant subject in which evil is more prominent than beatitude. It is a huge raven pecking out the eyes of a carcass, which is apparently that of a lioness. To attack the eyes first was regarded as a distinguishing characteristic of this bird of prey; and in this connection *Physiologus* tells us that 'confession and penance are the ravens that pull out the eyes of covetousness from the soul dead in trespasses and sins.' But this far-fetched analogy is merely illustrative of the fact that the men of the middle ages were anything but consistent in their symbolism. The significance of the raven is distinctly sinister; it was an emblem of the blind and unbelieving Jews, whose carnal minds live upon the carrion of the (dead) Law, as contrasted with the dove-like Christians who feast upon the spiritual food of the Gospel. The evil import of the raven in symbolism generally was doubtless deduced from the story of its behaviour in connection with the Deluge. The bosses of Norwich Cathedral (which are more than a hundred years later than the Exeter bosses) constitute a series from Scripture history, and in the second bay of the nave, where scenes of the Deluge are represented, the raven is shown preying upon the eyes of a dead horse. Also in a fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa, of which the subject is the building of the ark, the raven is introduced devouring the carcass of a man.

No. 132.

Possibly these two bosses of the thrushes and the raven are purposely set in antithesis to each other at the north and south of the same bay to point out the difference between the state of the Christian and the Jewish Churches respectively.



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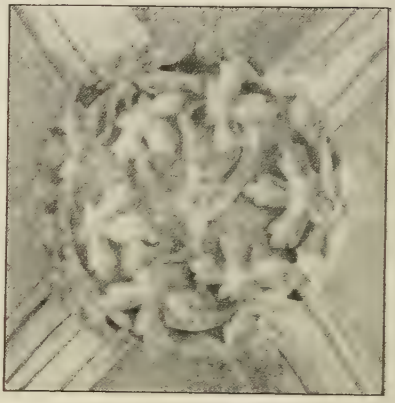

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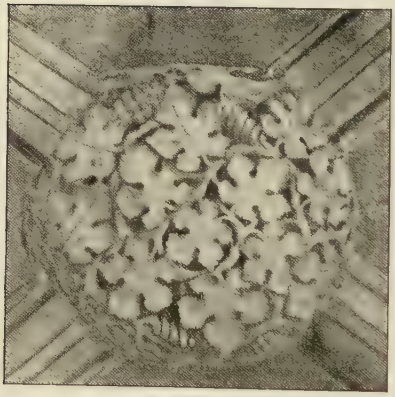

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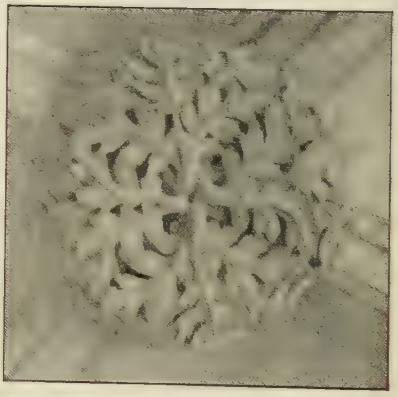


No. 141.

From an artistic point of view there is much to admire in this 'raven' boss, particularly the excellent manner in which the contrast between the utter inertness of the dead beast and the vigorous rapacity of the living bird is made manifest. Errors in proportion and anatomical form are, of course, very obvious; but the force of an artistic sympathy with character and subject is most noteworthy. The carver is not merely reproducing what he has learnt but that which he feels to be real, through the power of his imagination.

The vine in No. 133 and the maple in No. 134, with which this portion of the aisles terminates, are of the usual beautiful type already illustrated in the Lady Chapel and retrochoir bosses.

The four bosses, Nos. 138, 139, 140 and 141, of the two transeptal chapels of SS. James and Andrew, which lead out of the fourth bay of the north and south choir aisles respectively, also belong chronologically to this earlier division of the choir carvings. They are excellent examples of the artistic foliage designs and of the high standard of workmanship of the period. The maple in No. 139, although each leaf is exquisitely modelled, is not quite so admirable an arrangement, perhaps, as the vine in No. 140. The latter may well be taken as a typical example of the very highest point reached in the naturalistic work of the early fourteenth century when conventionalism had, for the time, been entirely discarded, whilst the carver still dealt with his material as stone, and did not aim—as so often seems to be the case in modern work—at imitating the actual texture of the leaves, etc., that he was representing. To preserve and embody an ideal of the subject portrayed, rather than to produce an exact imitation of any one of its manifestations, is a height in art not often achieved, unhappily not often attempted.

The somewhat formal arrangement of oak leaves in No. 138 is probably a mere fancy of the artist's; he seems to have taken for his model that evergreen oak (*Quercus coccifera*) which is common along all the Mediterranean coasts and is distinguished by the long, narrow, and much serrated form of its leaves.

No. 141 seems to be a somewhat formal treatment of a leaf much in favour at this period. It has already occurred in the retrochoir (No. 36) and in S. Gabriel's Chapel (No. 33);

and we shall find variations of it in the high vault, treated with a freer hand, in Nos. 56, 77 and 85. The large meadow-buttercup seems to have provided the motive for it.

The great depth and thickness of these bosses is noteworthy; the carving in this last example extends right up the sides of its projecting mass until it touches the unplastered web of the vault.

These four bosses are illustrated because special attention may well be paid to their complete naturalism. It is evident that before the later section of the choir vaulting was reached some distinct interval occurred, and in the meanwhile a more degenerate treatment of foliage on lines of convention rather than of nature triumphed over this purer art.

We must now turn to the four eastern bays of the high vault which constitute the presbytery proper: they are chronologically one with the bays of the side aisles that we have just been considering. It is in these bays that all the richest and most varied figure sculpture is concentrated. Obviously this would be the most skilled and costly work, for which the master-carver would trust no hand but his own, whereas, though he would also be responsible for the designs of the foliage bosses, his pupils may have executed much of the actual work.

Along the central longitudinal ridge, subjects of figure and foliage alternate regularly; the largest bosses, those which act as keys to eight ribs, are given the most important subjects:—groups, and scenes from Holy Scripture. Those next in size, where the transverse arch separating the bays crosses the ridge rib, generally have single figures, all the intermediate ones being foliage designs. On the transverse ridge ribs which cross the centre of each bay many very quaint and curious subjects are found; they are distributed without any apparent method, and here, as in the aisles, symbols of evil and sanctity appear indifferently on the north and south sides; contrary to the accepted tradition that representations of evil spirits were confined to the north side of a church as being in harmony with its dark and cheerless aspect, whilst the sunny south was the proper situation of all beneficent spirits and influences.

The reader should bear in mind that symbols of things must be carefully discriminated from pictures of the things

themselves. At the same time, a picture which is not symbolical in itself, may be in the highest degree symbolical in its position, or in its relation to other pictures or symbols with which it naturally forms a series. For example, a picture of the Last Judgement is not symbolic; but such a picture placed on the arch between the chancel and the nave becomes symbolic of the truth that judgement precedes our admission to the heavenly place. In this way even constructive necessities became symbolic to future ages, of which we have an obvious instance in the verticality of Gothic architecture. Of the application of this principle we shall presently have to discuss some examples.

No. 47.

At the eastern end of the main ridge where the rib meets the moulding of the great east window is a half-boss of foliage, No. 46a. Passing by No. 46, a foliage design, we come to the first bay of the choir, which contains centrally, over the High Altar, a large boss (No. 47) much coloured and gilded. The subject is the Coronation of the Virgin; it is a favourite motive in the sculptures of this Cathedral, perhaps because of the dedication of the original foundation, which was styled 'the Abbey Church of the Blessed Mary and S. Peter.' In the vault of the first bay of the north aisle of the nave is another Coronation (No. 286), and it is depicted on two of the large corbels, one on the north side of the choir and the other on the south side of the nave. Very probably it was also the original

subject of the two central niches over the main western entrance.

It is a simple yet expressive composition in which Our Saviour, crowned, and robed with regal splendour in red and gold, is shown in the act of placing a crown on the head of the Virgin who is seated beside Him and bending towards Him with her hands folded in an attitude of devotion.

According to widely accepted convention, the Virgin should be clothed in a close-fitting red tunic with long sleeves, and over this a blue robe or mantle. Here we have a dark-green robe, very plentifully begilt, and a black tunic. It is possible that the conventional colours were observed before the restoration of 1871-77, for, as we have already noted (see p. 2), an exact reproduction of the ancient colourings was not then attempted. On the other hand, green is the colour often associated with the Trinity in mediaeval times: Bishop Grandisson in his *Exeter Use* (circa 1337) orders green vestments to be worn by his clergy on the feast of Trinity.

On the right shoulder of her blue mantle should be a star, in allusion to the favourite description of 'Stella Maris'—one interpretation of her Jewish name of Miriam—and to Rev. ii, 28 ('I will give . . . the Morning Star'). This also is not discernible, but a huge splash of gold on the whole of that part of the robe is perhaps the 'restoration' version of the star. She is seated at the right hand of the Saviour, a position almost invariably assigned to her because of the promise in Ps. cx, 1 ('Sit thou on My right hand'). Our Lord holds in his left hand a book, symbolic of the Gospels. Around the figures is a wreath of the emblematical vine.

To appreciate the exact significance of this beautiful sculpture it is necessary to call to mind some general historical facts. It was not until after the condemnation of Nestorius and his heresy (A.D. 431) that compositions in which the Virgin and Our Saviour appear together became general. Immediately after that event the Mother and Her Son were frequently grouped in ornament, especially in altar-pieces, not as representations of the Virgin but as theological symbols, emphasizing the orthodox faith concerning the unity of the Person of Christ as opposed to Nestorianism.

The cult of the Virgin was a subsequent growth, and a large department of sacred art is devoted to the representation of scenes from the more or less apocryphal 'Life of the Virgin Mary' which was developed by this cult. They form a recognized and well-known series. Mr. Lethaby, in the articles to which we have more than once referred, adduces some evidence that, before the days of the image-breakers, the panels of the choir-screen, now filled with somewhat feeble and uninteresting oil-paintings, almost certainly contained such a series of sculptures. The crusades and pilgrimages of the eleventh and twelfth centuries exercised a great influence on religious art in all its branches, and this wave of Orientalism very considerably modified traditional representations of the Virgin Mary; much of the apocryphal teaching was made popular and its legendary lore was freely drawn upon by artists, especially the stories of Joachim and Anna, of the Death, Assumption, and Coronation of the Virgin.

But abundant evidence is given by Mrs. Jameson in her *Legends of the Madonna* that two distinct types of representation occur. The one treats pictorially and dramatically the series of tableaux which the 'Life of the Virgin' authorizes: the other is concerned only with certain selected subjects of which an accepted devotional and mystical interpretation was current. First among such devotional subjects was the Coronation of the Virgin. Treated dramatically and historically, it is the culminating scene of a series, such as may frequently be seen in Roman churches to-day. In the foreground is the empty tomb (often with the twelve apostles in attendance); above, heaven opens, galaxies of angels attend the Son who receives the Mother to share with Him the glories of His consummated victory. In such a picture the Virgin is generally robed very simply. In the second style of treatment the scene is, as here, usually a single subject; pictorial accessories are few or altogether absent; the Virgin, as Queen of Heaven, wears a splendid crown, sometimes intertwined with emblematical lilies and roses; her mantle is often of richest embroidery, in allusion to Ps. xlv, 13, 'The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.'

The 'Coronation' should then be regarded as purely devotional or typical. The Virgin is glorified as the type of the Church triumphant, having overcome the world, and the real significance of the composition is to be found in Rev. iii, 21, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne.'

It is in this sense that we must interpret the subject when found alone in ecclesiastical sculpture, in tympana of porches, corbels, etc. To distinguish this mystical symbol from the purely 'historical' incident, Mrs. Jameson suggests that it should properly be called the 'Incoronata.'

No. 48.

A mosaic in the tribune of S^a. Maria Maggiore at Rome (A.D. 1190) is perhaps the earliest extant example of the Incoronata, and the subject is treated with grand and solemn simplicity. The beautiful boss which watches over the High Altar of Exeter Cathedral is quite certainly purely symbolic, and the straitest opponent of Mariolatry need find in it no stone of stumbling.

Following our numbered order, we take next the boss at the northern end of the lateral ridge, No. 48. It is a coiled dragon-form, somewhat similar to those with which we have already met in the Lady Chapel (No. 3) and in the north choir aisle (No. 122). Here, however, we have only a single dragon. We shall find this class of subject recurring in other parts of the vaults of this period. Its latest appearance in the Cathedral proper (it is to be found at a still later date in bosses which belonged to the old cloisters) is in the easternmost bay of the north aisle of the nave, one testimony among many to the early completion of this bay of the nave. It is coloured dark green, a colour whose more favourable rendering we have just noted (p. 40), but whose general significance in mediaeval times was unfavourable because of its supposed association with fairies, goblins and other denizens of a nether world.

This scaly, horned, serpentine daemon, with bat-like wings, is always intended to represent an evil spirit. Its use in such an exalted and sacred spot as this—as also in the altar bay of the Lady Chapel—is rather puzzling. Perhaps it was intended to admonish worshippers; to remind them that even in the Holy of Holies on earth evil, though kept in a subject condition, cannot be entirely banished. It is very noteworthy that these evil daemons are always represented in the bosses as watchful but sullenly inactive, except where they are devouring *one another*. There are no instances in the Exeter vaults of scenes in which a devil is getting the better of a human being, or is even in combat with one, though such frequently occur in ecclesiastical carvings in less honourable positions.

The combined nature of serpent and dragon set forth in this type of monster indicates the *subtlety* of evil, and its *devouring* force. The serpentine form originated, of course, from the story of the Tempter in the Garden of Eden appearing as a serpent and the subsequent degradation inflicted upon that reptile; and also from the mention in the Book of the Revelation of the devil as a serpent. The horns are always an emblem of *power* of any kind (cf. Zech. i, 18); the wings are indicative of the rapidity and ease of the approach of evil temptations, and when these are of bat-like form they further signify the secrecy and darkness of evil. Where the tail is like a scorpion's it symbolizes the power of death present in any, even the extremest part, of evil; and the forked tongue often protruding from the mouth of these monsters represents the duplicity which is employed by the tempter when seeking to gain the tempted soul.

Its position on the north side is in accordance with the traditional view of the 'sunless quarter.' The devil in CHAUCER'S *Sompnoure's Tale*, asked where his dwelling is,—

> 'Brother,' quod he, 'fer in the north contre
> Wheras I hope somtyme I shal thee see.'

It was evidently the builders' intention to flank the Coronation with the symbols of the four Evangelists. Nos. 49, 50 and 51 are the Ox of S. Luke, the Eagle of S. John, and the Lion of S. Mark respectively. The symbols, both in conception and execution, are greatly

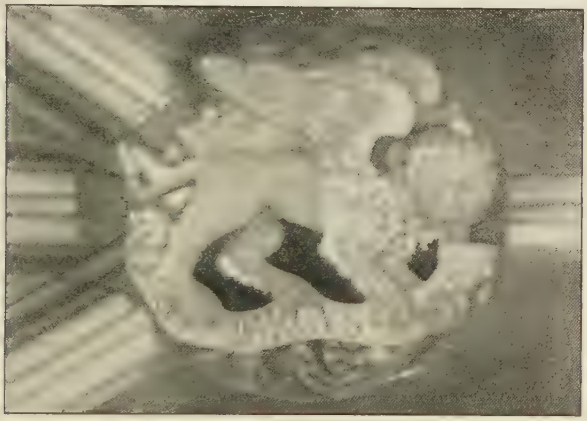
superior to those of the Lady Chapel, with which they may be compared. The "living creatures" are placed to much

No. 49.

No. 50.

better advantage, and the sculptor has aimed at 'full-length' portrayals—a great advance upon the cramped, curled-up forms of the earlier date, but a somewhat awkward effect is produced by causing each of the creatures to grasp the label on which its name is inscribed in hoof, paw or claw. The faces of the symbolic beasts are endowed with human expression to a more marked degree than in those of the Lady Chapel. For a fuller account of these symbols we must refer to the descriptions already given (pp. 14-16).

It is the habit of a certain school of symbologists to refer all things symbolic to Egypt or India as an ultimate source, thus arriving easily at the archaeological bed-rock of the 'solar myth.' The fact is that much symbolism is of a universal type, the reason for which is to be found in man's mental constitution. Ignorance must have symbols if it is to be raised one step from the earth. But we are only concerned with the specific applications of these symbols in Christian times and amid Christian environment. This particular use of four mystic beasts is in such



No. 51.

a marked degree common to all periods of art that it may be desirable to remind the reader, to whom parallelisms from Egyptian beast-headed deities and Assyrian gods with heads of bulls, lions and eagles are perhaps familiar, that Ezekiel, from whom these evangelist-symbols are confessedly derived, states definitely that his vision of the four living creatures was seen by him in Assyria, where such composite beings would be objects of daily familiarity to the prophet.

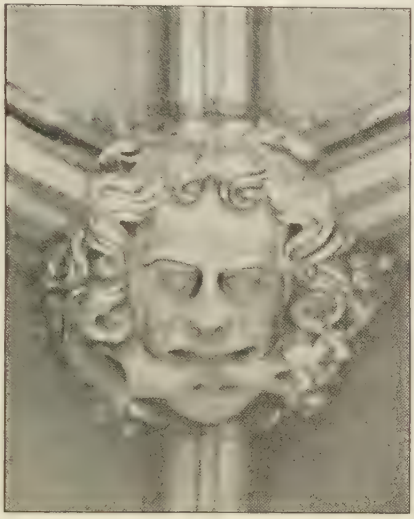
S. Matthew's symbol should be immediately to the south of S. Mark's, but in its place is a bearded face, No. 52, evidently a portrait of some person of importance who wears a flat head-dress. This is stated by Mr. Cotton to be an eleventh-century mitre, and he suggests that the portrait is

meant for Leofric. Leofric, however, is invariably shown with a shaven face. If it is a bishop it might be William Warelwast; but beyond the fact of the beard it bears very little resemblance to Warelwast's portrait as preserved by his seal which is reproduced in Dr. Oliver's *Lives of the Bishops of Exeter*. The head-covering is much more like the ordinary layman's cap, of which we had an example in the Lady Chapel bosses (No. 21). It may also be compared with the one worn by the bracket head in the last of the vaulting-shaft corbels on the south side of the choir (H). Possibly it is a portrait of one of the master-workmen, perhaps of the sculptor engaged on the decoration of the roof. Its position is no clue to its identity, for, as we shall show later, it is merely a stop-gap, possibly picked up as the one which could be best adapted to this position.

No. 52.

No. 53, the next to this, is another mask. It is a masculine face with long, curling hair, and the whole of the upper part of the face is quite normal, as if a portrait were intended. The lower part, however, is spoilt by a distended mouth, from which stems of foliage issue in the manner so common in mediaeval masks. The mediaeval artists in general were not very successful in their delineations of form, and their outline is usually much inferior to their finish. Perhaps the artist began with the intention of carving a portrait, and on being dissatisfied with the likeness finished it off in the manner of the common grotesque, of which we shall have more to say when we come to a less equivocal example.

Due west of the great central boss representing the 'Coronation' is a small foliage-boss (No. 54) of maple. Like No. 46, this marks the intersection of the tierceron ribs with the ridge-rib, and is a symmetrical arrangement of leaves. Indeed, in the case of No. 54 one might say the maple-leaves are arranged geometrically. This small detail of arrangement is one of the evidences of the earlier date of these bosses as compared with those we shall illustrate from the western part of the choir. As the style of treating foliage gradually developed from the purely and boldly conventional of the Early English period into the absolutely naturalistic of that which followed it (often known as 'Decorated'), we naturally find in the earlier part of the transition reminiscences of conventional or geometric designs, such as this. In the later stages of development nothing of the kind is retained and all the arrangements of foliage are free and flowing. Excellent examples of these latter have been given in Nos. 139 and 140, and may be compared with this earlier type. In the retro-choir bosses (*vide supra* pp. 26-29), we have observed several



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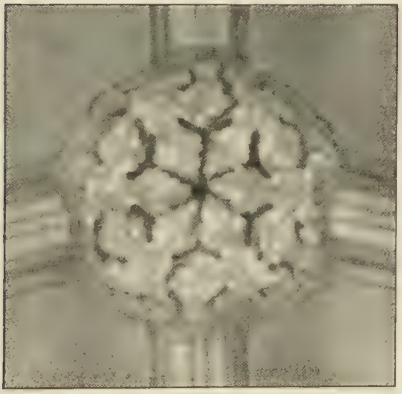


No. 54.

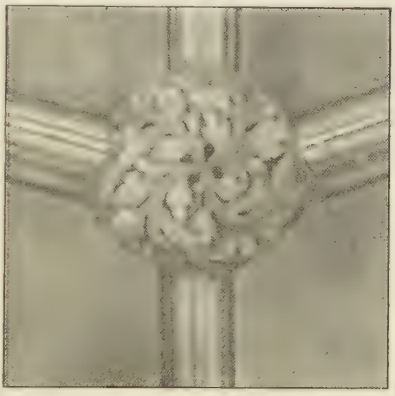
very geometrical arrangements of foliage, although in other designs in the same vault this is already discarded. Even in the Lady Chapel the same mixture of treatment is seen. Such mixtures and uncertainties are characteristic of all transitions, and in attempting to determine the chronology of styles the guiding principle must be the relative proportions in which the *surviving* or the *incoming* features appear.

No. 55 is well worth illustration. The seated angel playing on a harp of five strings is a pleasant figure full of grace and animation. If we regard this as an isolated subject it is merely a picture in stone, leading on the thoughts of the upward-gazing worshipper to heavenly occupations and delights. But following next in order to the 'Coronation'—for the foliage-boss in between is simply part of the formal alternating arrangement of figure and foliage subjects—it is full of significance. We cannot explain that significance better than by quoting from Mrs. Jameson's introduction to her *Legends of the Madonna* (p. 50): 'Angels seated at the feet of the Madonna and playing on musical instruments are most lovely and appropriate accessories, for the choral angels are always around her in heaven, and on earth she is the especial patroness of music and minstrelsy. Her delegate, St. Cecilia, patronised *sacred* music; but *all* music and musicians, all minstrels, and all who plied the "gaye science" were under the protection of Mary.'

No. 55.

In Coronation scenes these heavenly musicians are giving forth the 'Regina Coeli' in honour of the 'Regina Angelorum.' Lovers of sacred art will at once recall Giotto's angels waiting on their divine Mistress as her celestial choristers.

In accordance with the definite plan of the presbytery bosses, No. 56, which follows, is a foliage subject. It is noticeable as a much more naturalistic development of the buttercup-leaf motive we illustrated in No. 141. The lingering formality of arrangement seen in that boss and its other forerunners is here giving place to more free and graceful curves, and the easy flowing line is more in evidence. The actual forms of the leaves are far nearer to nature's living model. Geometric formality is not altogether banished; though the leaves themselves are natural enough they are placed in a formal and arbitrary fashion with the four stalks meeting in the centre. Indeed, this formality is by no means deposed as yet. In No. 64 it appears again in a pronounced fashion and does not make its last appearance until one bay later, where it is seen in No. 74.



No. 56.

In the large central boss of this bay is a representation of the Crucifixion (No. 57). This subject never appeared in art until the fifth century, and up to the eleventh century the body of Christ was always clothed in the long Byzantine robe. Afterwards, and until the middle of the fourteenth century, the drapery only covered the body from the waist downwards, as we see it here. Later, it was reduced to a mere waist-cloth. Before the thirteenth century the body of Our Lord was attached to the cross by four nails, one through each hand and foot; but towards the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century the symbolism of the Trinity was so developed that it was deemed necessary to reduce the number of the nails to three. The feet were not superimposed but supported by a wooden tablet, the *suppeditanum*, which was attached to the cross by a single nail. Later, the custom which has ever since been observed came into vogue, and the feet were arranged one over the other so that one nail sufficed to pierce both.

Didron, in his *Iconographie Chrétienne*, observed that the cross of Calvary was a tree and was therefore painted green, and that this symbolic use of the colour was still continued after the tree appears stripped of its bark and squared by the carpenter's axe.

No. 57.

The figures on either side of the cross are those of the Blessed Virgin and S. John. The attitude of the latter is almost invariably devotional, and in one hand, or under his arm, he carries a book as his emblem. The authorship of the Fourth Gospel was then unquestionably ascribed to him. The attitude of the Virgin is varied according to the significance of the composition. When the Crucifixion is treated historically, she is usually shown standing but half-fainting, or sinking to the ground in overpowering grief, or upheld by the two Marys. Such a scene is reflected in the ancient hymn:—

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem, lachrymosa,
Dum pendebat Filius.

But when the great Event is treated as a *mystery** the Virgin always stands on the right of the cross and S. John on the left. She looks up to the Crucified with an expression of mingled grief and faith, often with one hand supporting her cheek in token of sorrow, or bows her head upon her clasped hands in resignation. This is an idealised *Mater Dolorosa*, the personified Church mourning for the great Sacrifice.

The traditional colour for the Virgin's robes in a Crucifixion is violet or dark grey.† Here we now have a Virgin robed in red and blue, but it is impossible to say what was the colour of the original painting.

In this Cathedral the Crucifixion subject appears again four times on the bosses: in the vault of S. John Baptist's Chapel, in the first bay of the south aisle of the nave, in the high vault of the nave, and in the vault of the central west doorway. It is one in which the sculptor naturally put forth his best powers, but in no instance is it treated with more dignity than here. The figures of the Virgin and S. John, on either side, are somewhat indistinct from age and colouring, but that of Christ is clear, and the features and expression of the face, as well as the attitude of the figure, in their refinement and artistic feeling, testify strongly to the high standard attained by the figure-sculpture of the time. The Virgin in all the examples in this church has one hand raised to her face in sign of sorrow and the other upraised in expression of faith; S. John also has the right hand of faith uplifted. The composition here is encircled by a gilded wreath.

The lateral bosses of this ridge are full of interest, though in some cases they are difficult to interpret.

On the extreme north is No. 58, a figure of a man riding on a strange beast. His only clothing is a piece of coarse netting over his shoulders and a red Phrygian cap on his head. Although seated with the feet towards the steed's

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* Cf. MRS. JAMESON, *Legends of the Madonna*, *passim*.

† An interesting commentary on this is afforded by an entry in the Cathedral Inventory of 1327:—'*Una capa cinerei coloris pro Die Cinerium.*'

head, his body is so turned that the face looks almost full towards the tail, which is grasped in the right hand. The left hand holds something, possibly a goad with which he is urging on his steed; but it is more probable that it is one of the horns growing out of the animal's head. The steed's distinctive features are cloven hoofs, horns, and a beard. It is munching the foliage which encircles the boss. To eat branches of trees and to possess horns (which get entangled in the foliage and cause its death) is characteristic of the antelope, according to *Physiologus*, who describes it as symbolic of those who, getting 'entangled in the thickets of lust and pride and evil passions, fall an easy prey to the devil.' But we can find no record of any story in which a rider has an antelope for his steed.

No. 58.

A favourite mode of expressing mediaeval hatred of the Jews was to depict them riding in undignified attitudes on asses or swine. To exhibit contempt and abhorrence of them was an article of mediaeval Christian duty; to ride facing the tail of a beast was a mark of extreme degradation, and in such a position to be almost unclothed signified an added depth of shame. If this explanation can be adopted we have a somewhat unedifying testimony to the zeal of orthodoxy in the early fourteenth century.

Another possible line of interpretation is suggested if we recall the quaint view of some of the patristic theologians that all mythologies are corruptions and distortions foreshadowing the supreme truth of the gospel. From Jacob's mention of the ass's colt bound to the vine (Gen. xlix, 11) they derived the myth of Bacchus, and in the minster of Aix-la-Chapelle, which dates from the eleventh century, is an ivory relief on a reading-desk where Bacchus and all the symbols of his

cult are represented in this assumed prefigurative relation to Christianity (see EVANS, *Animal Symbolism*, p. 303). The influence of pagan poets and of the classical myths of Greece and Rome is present in so many mediaeval subjects that it is quite possible that this boss has some such significance. The beast with the cloven hoofs is a difficult zoological problem, and these same hoofs may be intended to make a scarcely obvious Bacchic reference more explicit. The Phrygian bonnet as a mark of caricature is essentially Bacchic in origin.*

A fragment of mediaeval poetry suggests another explanation. The present choir of Bristol Cathedral was the work of Abbot Knowle from 1298 to 1332; that is to say, it was going on at the very time when Exeter's choir vaulting was being completed. In the stalls are sundry carvings of incidents derived from popular tales, and among others is one of an abbot riding backward on an ass and holding the tail in his hand. It is a reference to a very old ballad in which some king asks three questions, apparently impossible of solution, of an abbot under penalty of dismissal and humiliation if he fails to answer. It is fairly well known in modern times, thanks to Bürger's re-setting with its recurring stanza:

> 'So lass' ich Euch führen zu Esel durch's Land
> Verkehrt, statt des Zaumes den Schwanz in der Hand,"

which in Miss M. A. Burt's translation is rendered:

> "On an ass shalt thou travel, far o'er the land,
> In lieu of a bridle, the tail in thy hand."

The abbot is rescued from his quandary by the wit of a servant of the monastery. Bürger's ballad associates the story with the Abbot of St. Gall. In PERCY'S *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, Vol. II, pp. 303ff., another version of the tale is given in which King John and the Abbot of Canterbury are the principals; but there are many variants. Traces of an old version are found called *King Olfrey* [query, Alfred] *and the Abbot*. Its riddling character in all the variants is distinctly monkish and mediaeval, and it was undoubtedly widespread and popular. This interpretation would afford further evidence of the growing jealousy between the secular clergy and the monks.

* Cf. WRIGHT'S *History of Caricature and Grotesque in Art*, p. 22.

Mr. T. Wright, in an essay on *The Carvings of the Stalls in Cathedral and Collegiate Churches*, mentions that on one of the stalls of Worcester Cathedral is carved 'the figure of a naked man enveloped in a net, with a hare under his arm, and riding on a goat.' He refers to this as a subject that may be 'strictly allegorical,' though without suggesting any explanation of its meaning. It is evident that all these unpleasant symbolic accessories are used to emphasize the 'deadly sin' of luxury. Mr. Wright goes on to say that 'the subjects most commonly supposed to be of this allegorical character are mere grotesques, copied or imitated from those fantastic sketches so often found in the margins of MSS. of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.' He has evidently missed the purport of these sketches.

No. 59.

The same author, in his *History of Caricature and Grotesque in Art* (p. 132), gives a woodcut of a sculpture from Lyons Cathedral of a naked witch riding a goat-like creature with a man's face which she controls by grasping its horn. The steed is some unfortunate human being transformed to this shape by her unholy arts. William of Malmesbury tells a story about a young man who was similarly victimized. Perhaps this is an 'awful warning' against wizards whose addiction to the vice of *luxury* is symbolized by the protruding tongue of the rider. Dealers in the 'black art' were often given the Phrygian cap of Bacchus's servitors in token of their uncanny allegiance to the devil.

Having set forth these various suggestions with the evidence for and against as completely as we are able to decipher it, we leave the skilled reader to give his final decision.

Next to this puzzle-picture is a Bishop's head and shoulders (No. 59), with his hands raised to support the ribs on either

side of his head; the backs of his hands are therefore turned to the floor below and his embroidered gloves are clearly visible. That which might be taken for a pair of horns projecting from the top of his mitre is in reality only foliage made prominent by gilding. The bishop is clean-shaven and wears a mitre of medium size. This vault was the work of Bishop Thomas Bitton's time, and we may fairly presume that this is intended for his portrait. The similarity to the likeness preserved by his episcopal seal, of which an engraving is given in Dr. Oliver's *Lives of the Bishops of Exeter*, is obvious, and the two portraits may be compared by those who have copies of Oliver's useful work.

No. 60 is merely a man's face, bearded, and with flowing locks on either side. It is probably a contemporary portrait, but in the absence of any distinctive details to aid in his identification the original is, at this date, a matter of merest conjecture. We might suggest that it is, possibly, one of the master-workmen.

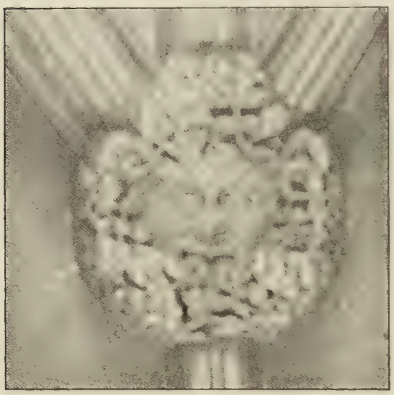
No. 60.

On the south is another of the foliate masks (No. 61). It is a good example of the entirely grotesque and repellent type of expression: the foliage, sprouting from mouth and ears and forming a wreath round the mask, takes the place of hair and beard.

It is often stated that this arrangement is intended to be symbolic of the creative energy of the Deity, especially where, as in many cases, the foliage-stalks issue from the eyes and ears as well as from the mouth; but this is hardly credible in view of the fact that there are so many of these instances in which the foliage-hair is thus arranged in connection with a grotesque and distorted visage without a trace of any attempt at the portrayal of divinity in its treatment. One such another we shall soon meet with in the south aisle

vault of the choir, and another may be seen as a corbel in the chancel of Ottery S. Mary Church. Similar foliage, but of oak-leaves and acorns sprouting from a satyr's mask, is on the under-seat of stall No. 3 in this Cathedral choir and is described in Miss K. M. Clarke's *Misericords of Exeter Cathedral, Part II.*

Whatever significance may have been imported into this device by mediaeval workers, its form is merely derived from the foliate masks of classic times. These probably had their origin in the actor's dramatic mask which furnished a general type for all faces with disproportionately large mouths. It was said to have been invented by Thespis as a better disguise than the besmeared face which until his time was the only means of concealing the actor's identity. It is noteworthy that Greek dramatic art originated in those Bacchic celebrations with which the mask is so closely identified. Thanks to the popularity of the mystery-plays in the middle ages, such masks would be familiar objects to the craftsmen, as well as recognised and traditional subjects of their craft. It is very abundantly evident that they found in the mask a fruitful source of grotesque suggestion. The large, full-lipped aperture, left that the actor might speak his part with clearness, lent itself, when used in decoration, to the accommodation of the stalks of the surrounding ornamental foliage: possibly, since these masks were often hung in vineyards in ancient times, as a sort of classic scarecrow, this arrangement of the foliage may have been suggested by the tendrils of the vines actually finding their way through the mouth-aperture.



No. 61.

The next one (No. 62) is a life-like and interesting head of a king; his hair is dressed in the fashion of the day with

full flowing locks on either side of the face, which is surmounted by a royal crown. He has a curling beard and moustache. The natural conclusion is that Edward the First is here represented; the resemblance to traditional portraits of that monarch, especially the long, oval face, is very marked. Two bays further west we shall find a female crowned head which may be that of his second wife (see No. 81).

No. 62.

In the last boss of this cross-ridge (No. 63) there is another of the dragon-forms already familiar to us. This is a peculiarly offensive specimen, with swollen, scaly body. It is biting viciously at the stems of the vine-branches with which it is surrounded (cf. No. 25).

No. 63.

We have already dealt at some length with this class of subject (*vide supra*, pp. 42, 43). For an explanation of the apparent intrusion of satanic symbols in places of peculiar sanctity it is necessary to recall the somewhat curious processes by which the mediaeval mind arrived at its conclusions. In the earliest representations of the devil he is emphatically depicted as a being to be feared and every accessory of dread—horns, hoofs, talons, forked tails, spears, flaming pits and so forth—were pressed into service. Then followed a period when it was clearly realized that his power

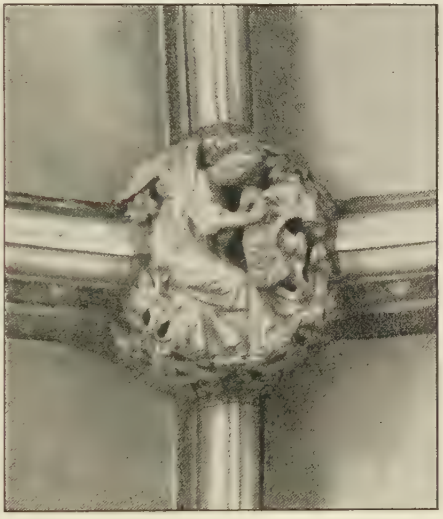
was held in leash, and, later still, ridicule rather than dread inspired the representations. In the middle period it was considered a shrewd blow at the devil—'a masterly stroke of pious policy,' as Mr. Evans phrases it—to compel him and his associate beasts of evil omen to attend the services of the church and to assist, *nolens volens*, at the celebration of her holiest offices. Consequently symbols and representations of evil powers played a conspicuous part in ornamentation generally and in ecclesiastical architecture in particular. They were embroidered on sacerdotal vestments, engraved on sacred vessels and carved round and about the very altar itself.

Very frequently these evil symbols are not to be read alone but to be taken in conjunction with those in their immediate neighbourhood. The beholder is, so to speak, called upon to make his choice between good and evil. Here, for example, is the Crucifixion of the central ridge set in opposition to this lurking fiend of its southern cross-ridge. The relative positions and importance assigned to the two subjects leave little room for doubt as to the artist's conviction that the good is triumphant and evil unwillingly attendant upon it. If such reasoning appears grotesque and unconvincing to the modern mind it must be remembered that we are here concerned with the records and expressions of human thoughts and beliefs in an earlier stage of intellectual development. Because this is so, as Mr. Evans reminds us, they deserve to be deciphered with as much care as Runic signs, Egyptian hieroglyphics or Assyrian cuneiform: for, fully understood, they will bring us into direct mental contact with a spiritual ancestry far more immediate and actual than the scribes of an earlier and more uncertain day.

Resuming the examination of the central ridge at No. 64, we have again a purely decorative design at the intersection of the tierceron rib. There is nothing specially worthy of note in its foliage except that it is a very symmetrical and somewhat conventional arrangement of the maple-leaf motive.

No. 65, on the main ridge, is a seated angel, bending over a large scroll on which he is writing. The attitude of the figure is natural and graceful, and the whole forms a very pleasing composition. Mr. Cotton says it represents S. Matthias. Perhaps his idea was that as S. Matthias

was specially elected, a picture of the Recording Angel inscribing his name was chosen to symbolize him. The lettering on the scroll is not easy to decipher. 'MATH . . S' is plainly visible, but the angel's hand partly covers the rest of the inscription. If the angel is making this inscription it is not easy to understand why he wrote the letters upside down; for that is their position relatively to the scribe in the boss. Further, there is no reason why S. Matthias should be specially selected for mention. He has no apparent connection with any of the subjects on other bosses and no particular connection with this Cathedral church; nor are any of his somewhat numerous emblems—halbert, sword, lance, axe, carpenter's square, book and scimitar—to be seen. So far as our investigations have led us, we have found no precedent for representing him in this fashion. Mr. Cotton's special facilities for close inspection from the scaffolding at the restoration of the Cathedral make it very desirable that the other two letters should be absolutely identified if possible, and anyone who will carefully examine the inscription with field-glasses in a good light, taking up a position to the south-west of the boss, may see, under the angel's hand, the lower horizontal stroke of an E and part of a V. This is, then, identified by the actual inscription as the missing evangelist's symbol which one would have expected to find at No. 62. But it is only fair to Mr. Cotton to state that the missing letters are very puzzling from any other position than that we have suggested.



No. 65.

Why was the symbol so far removed from its normal position? It is fairly evident, if we consider the acute angle of the short ribs which unite with the cross-ridge at No. 52, that so large a boss could not well be placed there in an upright position. Probably this was only realized after the boss had been carved and the necessary measurements were made for the fitting-on of the "arms" of the boss with the voussoirs of the ribs. Under these circumstances the present No. 52 was probably carved and substituted. The question would then arise as to the use to be made of S. Matthew's symbol. The regular succession of foliage designs at the intersections of the tierceron ribs and the angel-attendant west of the 'Coronation' boss were probably part of the set already arranged if not actually in position. The large 'Crucifixion' boss, with its attendant foliage bosses on the tiercerons, followed on: No. 65 would therefore be the first suitable vacancy for a boss of this size without unduly interfering with the pre-arranged sequence of the designs. Or, again, some accident may have befallen the S. Matthew symbol and another, ready carved, was substituted and the missing symbol afterwards placed here.

No. 67.

It is followed by a foliage design (No. 66), a repetition of the 'roses' motive found in S. Gabriel's Chapel; and after this comes the central boss of the third bay (No. 67), which is a vigorous portrayal of the combat between Samson and the lion. It is a well-arranged and wonderfully-executed work. The lion, whose jaws are almost crocodilian, is rearing up on his hind legs, and Samson (who is differentiated from David by a beard and by his profusion of long curling

hair, the source of his strength), robed in a short tunic reaching to his knees, has planted one foot on the animal's hind quarters whilst he is wrenching its jaws apart and backwards with his hands. In the quaint animal typology of the times the same creature had often very varying, and even opposing, significances. The men of the middle age appear to have possessed a considerable faculty for concentrating upon the immediate point of view with a delightful disregard of sentiments expressed on other occasions and from a different standpoint. We shall meet with the lion again where his symbolic use is more honourable and more in accord with the character given him by *Physiologus*. Meanwhile the animal is here considered entirely as subordinated to the symbolical Samson, who is regarded as a type of the Saviour. The composition is a homily upon the great text furnished by the last central boss, the Crucifixion (No. 57). Samson tearing open the lion's jaws was frequently quoted by patristic exegetes as prefiguring Christ's redeeming work (cf. St. Augustine, *De Samsone, Sermo I.*), and is often associated with the Saviour's deliverance of captive spirits in mediaeval delineations of the 'harrowing of hell.'

No. 68.

Perhaps because of the popularity of the Hercules myth, in which his victory over the Nemean lion affords an immediate parallel, this subject is frequently found in mediaeval churches and on consecrated vessels. There is a good example on the capital of a column in S. Sauveur de Nevres with the inscription 'SAMSON ADEST, HEROS FORTIS.' It is a beautiful symbol of spiritual power overcoming brute force.

No. 68, at the northernmost extremity of the ridge-rib, is another portrait, a man's head with the usual abundant long curling hair and beard and a stern expression. It is not easy to suggest an identification, and in the absence of any

specific data the difficulty of distinguishing between historic fact and some ingenious afterthought renders mere conjecture more misleading than helpful.

In No. 69 we have a figure of undoubtedly symbolic meaning. This is a Siren, represented in accordance with the common tradition of mediaeval art as a mermaid, with a woman's head and body as far as the waist, and terminating in a scaly fish's tail, which is here curled upwards and held by her in the right hand. This mythical being symbolizes as a rule the allurements of the flesh and the seductive power of female blandishments. Undoubtedly the origin of the symbol is the well known classic myth of the three daughters of the river-god Achelous and the muse Terpsichore, who lured sailors to destruction by the sweetness of their singing as the luckless mariners sailed too near the rocky shores of their islet off the coast of Italy. Against their wiles Ulysses fortified his crew by stopping their ears with wax and binding himself to the mast of his vessel until they had passed the fateful coast.*

No. 69.

Its application to Christian art seems to have sprung from a later adaptation of part of the siren-story which tells how they lost their power because of the superior singing of Orpheus whose minstrelsy aided the Argonauts to pass the isles unmoved so that the sirens threw themselves into the sea and were drowned. The first Christian sculptors would be masons who had been taught in pagan gilds, and

* CHAUCER, in the *Nonne Prestes Tale*, tells how

'Chaunteclere so fre
Sang merier than the mermayd in the see;
For Phisiologus seith certeynly,
How that they syngen wel and merily.'

the instincts and traditions of their training led them to make use of the classic art models. Orpheus thus became a type of Christ triumphing over the seductions of the world. The ship of the wandering king of Ithaca was transformed into the ship of the Church which bears those who embark in it safely through the temptations of this world.

As one figure from a whole history or legend was often all that was used to indicate the complete story and its teaching, the siren alone in her earliest ecclesiastical appearances may have borne this myth in its entirety with its Christian application upon her solitary shoulders.

Where she holds a fish or fishes in her hands the ensnared soul in the grip of sensual appetites is intended to be symbolized by the fish. In this attitude we meet with her again in the vault of S. Paul's Chapel, and her earliest appearance in the Cathedral, in the thirteenth century misericords, also shows her thus triumphant. Sometimes the siren's attributes are a comb and mirror, evidently from the story of the Lorelei, which is the German form of the myth.*

In classic art the siren was originally half bird and half fish; sometimes they still appear in this guise in mediaeval representations of them, whilst occasionally they combine the characteristics of all three:—a woman's head and torso, the wings of a bird and the tail of a fish. In this fashion they are depicted in the illuminated Psalter of Isabella of France, dating from the middle of the fourteenth century, an illustration from which is reproduced in Mr. Evans' book (p. 314). *Physiologus* describes the sirens as of three kinds. In each they are half woman; the other half may be fish (*i.e.*, the mermaid), or bird (*i.e.*, the harpy), or ass (*i.e.*, the female centaur). Sirens were very early confounded by patristic theologians with mermaids and supposed to be real creatures; some of the Fathers give another turn to the interpretation, saying that they were specially created to act as deterrents of carnal appetites and sensual enticements. The position of the symbolic siren here, in the same immediate series with the boss representing Samson,

* On a late thirteenth century misericord in Chichester Cathedral she is represented with the mirror only.

is evidently significant of that hero's downfall brought about by the wiles of Delilah.

Next to the mermaid-siren in the Presbytery vault is a boss, No. 70, composed of two winged dragon-forms, with long snake-like bodies coiled into a circle, biting at each other. They are significant of the conflict of evil passions. Here the evil principle embodied in unclean beasts is properly shown on 'the black side,' as the north was often called. Under the leadership of the 'Prince of the power of the air,' the chief of the meteorological devils, one of their duties was to foster unruly passions, in which task this sequence represents them as engaged. Dragons and serpents were great favourites as ornaments with all Teutonic people. They were intimately connected with their mythology and romance. When the Anglo-Saxons began to illuminate books, the dragon was continually introduced for ornamental borders and for forming initial letters (cf. Cædmon MS.) The grotesque imagination of Teutonic converts was introduced into the Christian system of demonology. Coils of serpents and dragons, which were the most usual instruments of torture in the infernal regions, were always a favourite object in ornamentation. It is sometimes bold and effective, as in those bosses in Wells Cathedral which show human faces distorted with horror under the attacks of numerous dragons. Writhing serpents tormenting the damned are vividly portrayed in the 'Harrowing of Hell' on the west front of Lincoln Minster.

No. 70.

Passing to the southern portion of the same cross-ridge we come to a scene (No. 71) in which a youthful figure is about to cut off the head of an elderly, bearded man who is crouching at his feet in a supplicating attitude; the stripling holds the man by the hair of his head and wields

an enormous sword in his right hand. David in the act of slaying Goliath is at once suggested; but it seems strange to us that the designer should have so disregarded, or overlooked, the details of the scripture narrative as to represent Goliath in long robes, with no vestige of armour about him. The panoply of warfare in which he was arrayed as champion of the Philistine host is so minutely described that we can only suppose either that the story was but imperfectly known to the carver or that he has disregarded the sequence of events and means here to show the giant denuded of his armour, as he really was immediately after decapitation. It is this very lack of detailed accuracy which betrays the symbolic nature of the scene. We have to be content with what the men who designed and executed the sculpture desired to convey by it. Often it is only one phase of a many-sided truth that is represented, only one aspect of a history that is emphasized. The early fathers got into difficulties when, in attempting to deduce doctrines from Our Lord's parables, they found the same thing (leaven, for example) used in both good and bad senses, and were obliged to formulate the canon 'theologia parabolica non est argumentativa.' A similar snare awaits those who attempt to interpret a symbolic use of a narrative as though it were a detailed pictorial rendering of that narrative.

No. 71.

Mr. Cotton describes it as 'Abraham offering up Isaac.' This is an evident error; for just those symbolic accessories which are used in representing that scene are altogether wanting (the Divine Hand, the knife, the ram). It is simply another illustration from the same series of types which Samson and the lion represents—the triumph of good over evil, expressed supremely in the 'Crucifixion.' Symbolism,

being in its essence a picture-language, often employs real objects and historic events. A type is something that prefigures, but, retrospectively considered, it represents. In this way many of these Old Testament typical forms were afterwards impressed into the service of symbolism. The introduction of David is especially appropriate here, for David's slaughter of the lion was usually regarded as a far more explicit and important type of Christ's victory than Samson's. This because of his prayer, 'Save me from the lion's mouth' (Ps. xxii, 21), and his confession, 'The Lord delivered me out of the paw of the lion' (I Sam. xvii, 37).

No. 72.

No. 72 is another somewhat grotesque foliate mask. The open mouth, the foliage sprouting from the bridge of the nose, and forming also the hair and beard, make it a good example of a class of which we have already given some explanation (*vide* pp. 55-6).

Mr. Wright, in his *History of Caricature and Grotesque in Art* (p. 159), has observed that 'the intellectual development of the middle ages came almost all from Rome through one medium or another, although we know so little of the details of the popular literature of the Romans that we cannot always trace it.' In the matter of these mask-like faces anyone who will consult Gardner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* will find in the broad, coarse face of the monster Typhon the exact prototype of the long series of faces or masks continually recurring in grotesque ornament. It is frequently found in Greek art, where it is not called a mask but a Gorgon. Thanks to the pagan traditions of the builders of the first Christian edifices, these old models were handed down to the ecclesiastical and domestic architecture of the middle ages. We shall do well to remember that the sentiments expressed

in mediaeval sculpture are those of a time when there was a general lack of refinement. Their ideal of humour was about on a level with that of the early Victorian yokel to whom another yokel grinning through a horse collar appealed as excruciatingly funny. Such people would be charmed with these mediaeval grotesques, and contemporary church decoration in this respect was eminently adapted to mediaeval society.

The southernmost boss of this ridge, No. 73, is another head of a mitred ecclesiastic. The hands are upraised in the same manner as those of the bishop in No. 59, holding up the adjacent ribs and showing the backs of his embroidered gloves to those below. His features, curling hair and beard, and whole aspect are extremely like a head which we shall find on No. 127 in the north choir aisle. But on this present boss the person represented wears a pallium, or circular scarf, of lambswool, of which the two falling ends are fastened over the chasuble and ornamented with six black crosses. This has been supposed to be the last relic of an abbreviated toga and is the peculiar mark of primates, metropolitans and archbishops. The portrait is therefore in all probability that of Robert Winchelsey, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1294 to 1313, who withstood the exactions of Edward I, and who excommunicated Piers Gaveston. Prior to 1305 Winchelsey went unpunished for his opposition to the King because the Pope, Boniface VIII, supported him. In that year, however, on the death of Boniface, Winchelsey was formally accused, summoned to Rome and suspended.* His portrait was probably executed in the time of his power and

No. 73.

* See STUBBS, *Early Plantagenets.*

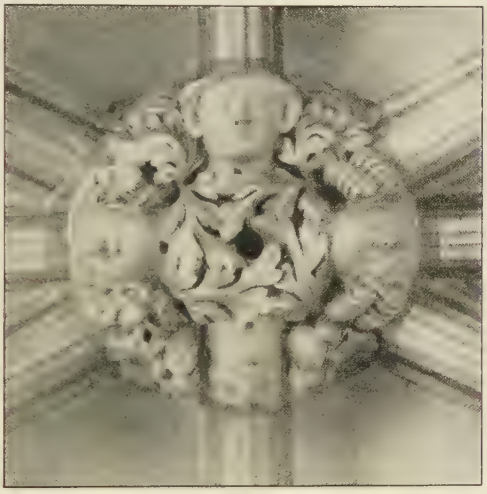
popularity, which was at its climax in the years when he so successfully withstood the king. This entirely corresponds with our chronology, putting this part of the high vault somewhere between 1301 and 1304.

The little foliage boss (No. 74) that follows at the junction of the next tiercerons with the centre ridge consists of a very simple design of four vine-leaves symmetrically arranged with their tips meeting in the centre. On the boss which unites the transverse arch with the main rib (No. 75) is a seated female minstrel playing with a disproportionately large bow upon a somewhat unwieldy viol or rebeck. The figure of the minstrel, however, is very graceful, it is not a conventional angel, as what might be taken for wings when looking at the boss from the floor proves to be a background of gilded vine foliage. It is, therefore, to be interpreted as all other subjects where musicians hymn Divine praises or play on their instruments, especially the lute and the viol, as a reference to Heb. i, 6, or to the worshipping multitudes of the Book of the Revelation. Taken in conjunction with No. 55, it may be intended to express a favourite proposition of mediaeval Christianity, that the religion of Heaven is like that of the earth in kind if not in degree.

No. 75.

The viol or fiddle was the most popular mediaeval instrument; unlike the pipe and tabor it had not become vulgarised by its popularity, and was considered a fitting vehicle for religious musical expression. A French contemporary writer notes that the Virgin Mary was very fond of its music: 'La douce mère Dieu ama son de viele.'

A small foliage boss of ivy, No. 76, follows this as the first of the fourth bay, and then we come to the next large central boss, No. 77, which is composed of four masks, two female and two male, set respectively north and south and east and west, and radiating from a centre of beautifully carved and gracefully arranged foliage, of the same type as Nos. 56 and 141 already illustrated. These masks are not the same as those in the boss (No. 18) in the Lady Chapel, although similarly arranged and having perhaps the same general significance. Here the faces are too much turned upwards to be properly seen from the floor: this is probably due to the carving having been done in the workshop without properly considering the effect of the work when the boss was placed in its exalted position. One thing, however, is plainly discernible—that the women's masks are no longer enveloped in wimples but are adorned with a profusion of curls on either side of the face.



No. 77.

The four cardinal points signify, of course, the four quarters of the globe: in the symbolism of numbers four was generally considered to represent the world. In this connection the male and female heads may perhaps represent 'every creature,' and the world-wide appeal of the Gospel as foreshadowed by Our Lord's last command to His apostles. S. Augustine observes, 'From these four [parts of the world], saith the Lord in the Gospel, shall the elect be gathered together.' Placed as the centre of

the last bay of the presbytery, this boss may very appropriately bear some such interpretation.

The holes pierced through this boss—many of them are pierced, presumably, for suspended lamps, or candelabra—are very noticeable. In addition to the large central hole, there is a smaller hole in each of the four throats.

In this boss, as in many others of the choir vault, the junction of the keystone shows clearly through the paint. The eight projecting shoulders into which the eight ribs are fitted are plainly discernible.

It is not quite easy to assign definite meanings to all the subjects in the laterals of this bay. The observer will note that they are distinctly different in execution from the other bays of the presbytery. The carving is particularly light and open; the foliage does not cluster so closely as before, and the surface is comparatively flat. It is evident that either a change of hand has taken place or else a change of style, especially in the matter of foliage, is beginning to make itself felt.

No. 78.

The northernmost boss, No. 78, depicts a king of early type, seated with a sceptre in his right hand, surmounted by a trefoil—almost exactly similar to one shown in MS. Reg. 2 A. xxii* of a king at the latter end of the twelfth century. The right leg is crossed over the left in a manner that must have been extremely uncomfortable: this is probably due to the flatness of field achieved in these bosses aggravated by the sculptor's inability to foreshorten properly.

There is no nimbus or other attribute to show that a Divine Person is intended. Possibly it is meant to represent Edward the Confessor, in whose reign Leofric's stool was transferred from Crediton to Exeter and whose original charter of 1050 is still preserved among the Cathedral

* Reproduced in SHAW's *Middle Ages*, Vol. I.

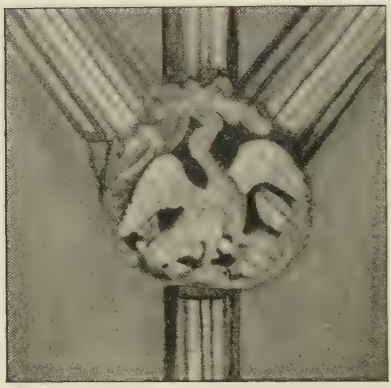
archives. The other royal portraits in the Cathedral are all of them merely heads, and it is not quite easy to explain why the Confessor should be shown full-length. More probably it is a reference to some popular character in ballad, play or romance of the time; especially when we consider the type of subject chosen for representation in the other bosses by the same hand.

No. 79 is a vigorous figure of a man in the act of hurling a large stone. It is, apparently, a study of an athlete 'putting the weight.' The same subject is also found on one of the misericords (No. 28), where, however, it is carved in a far more archaic manner. The corresponding boss on the south side of the same cross-ridge (No. 82) depicts two men wrestling, and it seems probable that these bosses are devoted to recording simply some of the national sports which were popular in the country at this period; the misericord furnishes additional evidence in support of this view. It is, further, well known that the Church in the middle ages distinctly aimed at bringing under her supervision and patronage, if not actually within her jurisdiction, the whole life of the people, including their recreations. Although the original intention was the consecration of the secular rather than the secularization of the consecrated, many unseemly results followed from this principle in practices that were under her direct control. The Feast of the Ass, the Feast of Fools, the Festival of the Boy-Bishop, are among the examples that will immediately occur to all who are acquainted with the literature of the period. This centralization of all kinds of interests within the domain of the Church often accounts for subjects being used in decoration within the walls of a sacred building which, to our minds, seem not only to have no connection with it but to be, indeed, something of an intrusion.

No. 79.

The attitude of this athlete is very life-like and well-balanced, and affords further evidence of the very considerable skill achieved in portraying human action.

In the next boss of this cross-ridge, No. 80, is the fabulous phoenix, a favourite symbol of the Resurrection. The phoenix and its story, obviously a product of primitive sun-worship, were early adapted to the service of Christian symbology. In *Physiologus* a very full and circumstantial account of this bird is given. There we learn that it is a native of India, but when it is five hundred years old it experiences a craving for a change of scene and flies to Lebanon, where it fills its wings with the fragrant gum of a tree growing there (hence its outspread wings are said to typify the Old and New Testaments). From Lebanon it continues its flight to the temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, where it immolates itself on the high altar, leaving a small worm among the ashes which in three days is developed into a full-grown phoenix once more. It is also a favourite mediaeval type of the righteous, because of the Septuagint reading, *hōs phoinix*, in Ps. xcii, 12; from which they believed that the righteous are to flourish 'like the phoenix,' instead of the more familiar 'palm-tree' of our versions.



No. 80.

Special interest attaches to this subject in connection with Exeter. Most of the Christian symbolism embodied in the story of the phoenix is traced back to a hexameter poem, *De Phoenice*, which is usually ascribed to Lactantius, A.D. 325. Of this there is a very excellent Anglo-Saxon paraphrase, supposed to be by Cynewulf, in *Codex Exoniensis*, or *The Exeter Book* as it is familiarly called. This is often described as containing 'the only Anglo-Saxon bestiary,' and dates from the end of the eighth century. Only fragments of the bestiary are preserved, but they suffice to show its great superiority over all other versions in poetic beauty and vigour of expression. One of the longest of these fragments

deals with the phoenix and has been admirably translated by Professor Israel Gollancz. It describes with much minute detail how

> 'A bird of pinions strong, wondrously fair,
> inhabiteth this wood. Phoenix it is hight.
> The lonely bird holdeth its dwelling there,
> its brave existence : ne'er shall death scathe it,

and gives a wealth of moral and theological deductions from the bird's appearance and habits. As in *Physiologus*—which was compiled at a very early date from all manner of sources, chiefly pagan and oriental — the self-immolation of the phoenix and its resurrection after three days is definitely applied as a parallel to the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. It had been used previously in Jewish writings as emblematic of the renewal of life and vigour. On early Christian tombs and in early Church mosaics it often appears together with the palm-tree, to which the same power of renewing its life through death was attributed.

No. 81.

In those bestiaries which are illustrated and in early carvings it is usually represented as rising from the flames, or as burning in its nest, or seated amid palm-branches. On this boss none of these accessories appear, the bird alone being by this time too familiar a symbol of resurrection and immortality to require any explanation of its attributes.

On the south the next boss, No. 81, has an interesting portrait head of a Queen in crown and wimple. The exaggerated development of the wimple is very noteworthy. It is almost an anticipation of Chaucer's Wyf of Bath, of whom he says—

> 'Her kerchiefs weren al ful fyne of grounde ;
> I durste swere they weigheden ten pounde
> That on a Sonday were upon her hed.'

That it is a portrait is suggested by the fact that the same face appears again in the north choir aisle (No. 128), similarly crowned and draped. But it may be that the refined features and serene expression of both these masks are merely those of a more or less conventional type familiar to the carver.

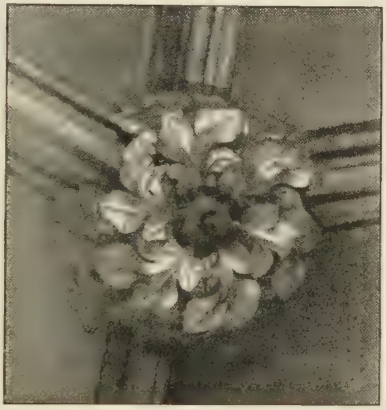
Even for the effigies of royal personages—such as those famous ones by Torel, in Westminster Abbey, of Henry III, and of Queen Eleanor, wife of Edward I—a conventional type of face was adopted, and we are told on good authority that none of the well-known effigies in the Abbey are portraits until that of Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III (see paper on 'The Tombs of Westminster Abbey,' by Mr. W. Burges, F.R.I.B.A., in *Gleanings from Westminster Abbey*).

No. 82.

The boss may have been executed in honour of Margaret of France, the second wife of Edward I and sister of King Philip, to whom Edward was married after the campaign in Flanders, which terminated in the recovery of Guienne. There is no record which speaks of her as renowned for her good looks as was the case with Queen Eleanor; but as she was undoubtedly the Queen-consort at the time of the erection of this vault it would be a natural compliment to place her portrait (or conventionalized representation) among the bosses. The portrait, with sundry others of queenly appearance, is stated by Mr. Cotton to be that of Queen Eleanor; but as she died in 1290 it is more likely Queen Margaret was intended; the distinctive marks of an 'Eleanor' portrait—which we shall have occasion to discuss later—are certainly not to be found here.

The wrestlers, to whom we have already referred (p. 71), form the subject of the next boss, No. 82, and display in their postures and action generally an immense amount of

the vigour which characterizes the figures of Samson and of the weight-putter. It has been described as 'Jacob wrestling with the Angel,' but there are certainly no special angelic attributes to differentiate either of the figures. Although this subject does occur in church carvings (there is an example at Hutton Cranswick and another in the bosses of Norwich Cathedral nave), there is no confirmatory detail here which might seem to warrant a specifically scriptural interpretation: probably the description is to be accounted for by the assumption too often made and too little justified, that the old carvers sought their subjects in the pages of Holy Writ. It is more probable that the line of interpretation suggested above in considering No. 79 will furnish the actual clue to the carver's motive. It is, of course, possible that both these subjects are taken from some popular stories or ballads of the time and that the actual key is lost to us with all traces of the fugitive poems or tales which suggested them. There is another very similar carving of the same scene on one of the south transept vaulting shafts which is illustrated later in this book.



No. 83.

The last boss on this ridge, No. 83, is a beautiful piece of foliage carving, in which the most gracefully moulded leaves are folded one over another in a circle, all emanating from a common centre of stems.

With No. 84, the next boss on the central ridge, we draw near to the end of the series belonging to this earlier portion of the choir vault—the four presbytery bays. It is noteworthy that it is the last animal subject that appears in the whole choir vault.

The design is composed of four animals arranged in a circle, about a fifth, which is curled round to form the

central portion of the boss. The four which constitute the outer ring are represented as in motion, each chasing and biting the one ahead. It has, for some reason or other which we cannot fathom, been described as a 'boar-hunt'; Mr. Cotton, with greater probability, describes it as hounds chasing hares. The identity of the animals is somewhat doubtful, but there are two hares, a dog and another which is differentiated in several points from the dog and appears to be a pig. The hare, in very early times an omen of evil, was often a symbol of libidinousness, the pig of sensuality, and the dog in the early symbolism, which retained the oriental view of this animal's characteristics, represented an incarnation of evil passion. Possibly, then, they here signify the tendency of one vice to follow another until literally, if not logically, a 'vicious circle' is formed.

No. 84.

These symbols of evil propensities are just outside the presbytery proper; they follow after the boss representative of humanity with the four masks, and their position seems to imply the safety of those within the sacred place from the passions which, though they draw near, are unable to disturb the soul immersed in holy mysteries and by their activity can only achieve mutual destruction.

No. 85.

No. 85 is the last of the foliage designs which belong to the high vault of the presbytery. It forms a strong contrast in conception and workmanship to its immediate neighbour, No. 86; and there is evidently a distinct change which marks the time that elapsed before the work on the choir vault was resumed. For this reason it should be carefully compared with No. 86 by all who are interested in the development and degeneration of foliage-carving. The latter will be duly illustrated in its proper place in our next chapter.

The subject here is the same leaf that has already supplied a motive in Nos. 56 and 141—and on other bosses to which reference has been made; it is quite a favourite motive in the Exeter foliage-sculpture of this period. It is noteworthy that the arrangement partakes more definitely of the wreath form, and in this respect it points the way westward. In that later portion of the choir vault which remains to be examined we shall find that foliage is the favourite motive and that the wreath is the favourite form of its arrangement.

CHAPTER IV.

The Bosses of the Western Portion of the Choir Aisles and of the Choir Vault.

Certain indications suggest that the next portion of the vaulting to which the masons addressed themselves was the completion of the three remaining bays of the north and south choir aisles. The evidences for this are chiefly in the affinity between the subjects of the bosses and those already examined in the presbytery and in the similarity and development of the treatment. This order, apparently, assumes that there is no break in the sequence, and at first sight, perhaps, the division we have made in the choir aisles seems altogether arbitrary. But though we have ventured to place the aisle bays which flank the presbytery before the presbytery high vault, we would remind the reader that their order in time was left an open question, with the date of the carving of both apparently contemporaneous. That some real difference in date between eastern and western bays does exist we feel sure, and for this reason the western ones are placed at the beginning of this chapter instead of at the end of Chapter III. Upon examination of them the weightiest evidence will be found in the treatment of the foliage, not in itself an irrefutable authority, of course, but when it is contrasted with the foliage of the bosses in the aisles of the presbytery bays it will at once be seen to be a witness whose testimony cannot be altogether ignored.

There is also documentary evidence which may lend some support to this division in date. Archdeacon Freeman in Note 35 of his *Exeter Cathedral* quotes from the Fabric Roll of 1303-4, 'In 6 clav. in ala talliand. 21s.'* He is at a loss to interpret this because, as he points out, it does not agree with the number of bosses in any aisle. It does, however, correspond with the number of these westernmost bosses in the north and south aisles. If it is objected that

* 'For carving six bosses in the aisle, 21s.'

this would require the entry to read 'in alis' it must also be remembered that, apart from the nice questions of mediaeval calligraphy and syntax which might be discussed, the continuous aisle surrounding the choir on the south, east and north is frequently spoken of in the singular. It is, then, not impossible that this payment for carving aisle-bosses at the very time when we should have expected these bosses to be in hand in the workshop may refer to them.

Three of these six bosses are portraits of considerable excellence, and it might easily be supposed that they belong to the period when the portrait bosses of the presbytery vault were produced. That they are in point of fact somewhat later in date is conclusively indicated by the nature of the foliage used to fill out the shape of some of the bosses. The leaves here are on a very large scale in proportion to the faces and are 'lumpy,' with exaggerated undulations, approximating closely to the type which is more fully developed and prevails so monotonously in the western bays of the high vault of the choir. In this respect they are quite unlike any of the foliage bosses which appear in the vaulting of the presbytery bays.

No. 127.

There is a striking similarity of style and sculpture between two of the bosses in the north aisle and some of the portraits already illustrated in the high vault of the presbytery. No. 127, a bishop's head, is indeed so similar to No. 75 that it were easy to conclude that they are two portraits of the same individual but for the distinguishing dress of the ecclesiastic in the earlier boss which suggests that it is a portrait of Archbishop Winchelsey (see p. 67).

The prelate in the north choir aisle is popularly assumed to be Peter Quivil, Bishop of Exeter from 1280 to 1291,

and Bitton's immediate predecessor. It is not unreasonable to assume that, though he died some years before, so active a promoter of the transformation of the Cathedral and such a generous benefactor to the work should be so commemorated. Unfortunately there is no monumental effigy of this bishop with which comparison can be made, nor does he figure among the portrait-seals reproduced in Dr. Oliver's *History*. We are therefore obliged to leave the establishment of his identity to await fuller information. In the face here presented strength of character and amiability of disposition are portrayed; artistically, the carving is of high merit, the features are well cut and the moulding of the face very fine and expressive.

No. 128.

These qualities of craftsmanship are even more conspicuous in the portrait in the adjoining bay, No. 128. This Queen, whose portrait, surely, has already been given in No. 81, becomes quite a real person to us from the individual character conveyed in the two representations of her. But we do not seem to have any sure clue to her identity. As we have already stated, she is popularly supposed to be Queen Eleanor of Castile, the first wife of Edward I; and the pleasant, modest, yet strong character suggested in this face would seem to correspond so well with the historical records of that good and well-beloved 'chère reine,' that, had we no other evidence as to her personal appearance, we should not have ventured to raise any objection to this popular verdict. In considering No. 81 we pointed out that it was intrinsically more probable that Queen Margaret's portrait would be given at this date, and there is another consideration which is still more unfavourable to the acceptance of this popular verdict. In the effigies of Queen Eleanor, in Westminster Abbey, in the contemporary statue

of her on the south external wall of Lincoln choir, and on her crosses, we find one distinguishing feature which makes it very difficult to accept the traditional identification of her with this portrait. This feature is the absence of the wimple or kerchief of any kind. In Spain the ladies were remarkable for their beautiful hair, and Eleanor followed the fashion of her country, wearing it in ample clusters of ringlets on either side of her face and flowing down to her neck (see Miss Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England* where she quotes from Pennant respecting this Queen). Although we have already seen (p. 74) that these effigies must not be relied upon as portraits, yet in all probability they faithfully reproduced the dress and manner of wearing the hair of the person whom they commemorated. We must therefore look elsewhere for her portrait in the Cathedral, and can merely conjecture as to the identity of the be-wimpled Queen who served as a model for this remarkably fine face.

It may, indeed, have been none other than the fourteenth century master-carver's idea of the probable aspect of the Saxon Queen Eadgytha, wife of Edward the Confessor, to whom Exeter as well as Winchester came as her wedding gift and who joined with her husband in the enthronement of Leofric, the first Bishop of the See after the transference of its Stool from Crediton to Exeter. Of course, the dress is not that of Eadgytha's day, but such a discrepancy would merely be in accordance with the common custom of mediaeval art which represented historical personages of a bygone time dressed in the fashion in vogue at the time of the execution of the work. The wimple, being the ordinary head-dress of Englishwomen in the early fourteenth century, would be quite naturally bestowed upon any imaginary portrait of a woman, of whom nothing was actually known. Freeman, in his *History*, to which we have already often referred, shows that in all probability a statue of Queen Eadgytha occupied one of the three large niches in the sedilia, which was part of the work done during Stapeldon's episcopate. To find her portrait (even if only an imaginary one) here in the vaulting, just a few years before her statue was placed in the sedilia (*circa* 1317) would not be at all unlikely.

Whoever the artist may have been who was responsible for this boss, he has shown himself worthy of the work; the delicately modelled lips and cheeks seem to reveal a real enthusiasm for his subject as well as the skill of a master hand, while the bold yet graceful arrangement of the folds of the head-dress also speak of the artistic ease with which the chisel was handled.

In both these portrait bosses faint traces of colour still remain, especially on the lips of the Queen's face, showing that, though now in the natural colour of the stone, they were once tinted.

The westernmost bay of the same aisle has for its boss, No. 129, the familiar West-country subject of a Sow and Farrow. There are various interpretations of this design current, and legends connected with the other churches in which it occurs are freely supplied as explanatory of its significance. But as none of these would apply to the Cathedral, nor to all of the churches in which this subject appears, a more probable and satisfactory exposition of its meaning has to be sought.

No. 129.

Miss Beatrix Cresswell has an explanation which she has worked out in an account of Braunton Church, where there is a boss with the same subject. Miss Cresswell's intimate acquaintance with the churches of the diocese enables her to state that similar devices are to be found at Broad Clyst, Newton St. Cyres, Spreyton and Ugborough, and it was evident that the local Braunton legend connecting the boss with S. Brannock could not apply to all these cases. Very courteously Miss Cresswell has made us free of the clue to this strange device, concerning which no other authority has a more satisfactory suggestion to offer

than that it is a 'parable of the Church drawn upon by hungry followers'!

This clue is in Father Tiber's prophecy to Aeneas, recorded in the *Aeneid*, Book VIII, ll. 42-48:—

> Jamque tibi, ne vana putes haec fingere somnum
> Littoreis ingens inventa sub ilicibus sus,
> Triginta capitum foetus enixa, jacebit;
> Alba, solo recubans, albi circum ubera nati.
> Hic locus urbis erit, requies ea certa laborum:
> Ex quo ter denis urbem redeuntibus annis
> Ascanius clari condet cognominis Albam.*

This, according to Virgil's fancy, was the explanation of the name of the city which preceded Rome:—Alba Longa, the long white (sow). It is, of course, merely a poetic fancy, and the obvious explanation of the name is to be found in the topographical position of Alba Longa; but to the monkish carvers of the middle ages Virgil stood almost in the light of a prophet. Aeneas had found a sacred site where lay the white sow with her young, and so they carved the symbol on the bosses for their church roofs, intending thereby to signify that here, too, pious builders had found a sacred site.

Confirmatory of this Roman origin of the design in question is the fact that it was one frequently employed on the Roman standards, sometimes also on their medals and coins. Many authors have asserted that this was only in reference to the conquest of Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus, the figure of a pig being employed to indicate the subjection of the Jewish nation, to whom this animal was an object of special abhorrence. But in a learned *Dissertation on Satyrical Medals* by PÈRE F. P. GOURDIN,† this

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* 'And that this nightly vision may not seem
Th' effect of fancy, or an idle dream,
A sow beneath an oak shall lie along,
All white herself, and white her thirty young.
When thirty rolling years have run their race,
Thy son Ascanius, on this empty space,
Shall build a royal town, of lasting fame,
Which from this omen shall receive the name.'
Dryden's Translation.

† Read before the Society of Antiquaries, Dec., 1787. See *Archaeologia*, Vol. IX., pp. 65, 66.

theory is refuted, and he stated that 'this animal long before the destruction of Jerusalem was represented upon the Roman standards, as we learn from Festus (L., XIV.):—'Porci effigies inter militaria signa quintum locum obtinebat, quia confecto bello, inter quos pax fieret, caeso porco foedus firmari solebat.'

Festus does not make it clear why a sow and farrow on a standard was taken to signify the sacrifice of a pig in ratification of a treaty of peace. Had he been able to show good cause, we might be tempted to discover other symbolical import in the subject. As his assertion does not seem conclusive, to say the least of it, we prefer the 'sacred site' suggestion.

There is a great contrast between the carving of this boss and that of the two portrait-heads just preceding it. Either the sculptor felt no interest in the subject and therefore executed it in as perfunctory a manner as possible, or else it is the work of an inferior hand. The relief is poor, and the detail so blunt as to be often merely indicated by a roughly chiselled line or groove. In another specimen of the same subject which we find in the nave vault (No. 216) the execution is even rougher and more careless, although in the same bay some very fair figure work occurs.

To construct any hypothesis on these very conjectural interpretations of Nos. 127-129 may seem a fantastic experiment. If, however, they should prove to be correct, we have some connected sequence from west to east: first, the favourable site (the sow and farrow), then the episcopal foundation (Queen Eadgytha), and lastly the great builder (Quivil).

Corresponding to the two fine heads in the north aisle are another pair on the south, Nos. 135, 136, which we cannot equally admire; they can scarcely be the work of the same skilful hand. For one thing, the heavy, deep colours with which they are painted tend to give them a coarse appearance. Unlike the tinting of the north aisle bosses, this painting has fully resisted the action of time. The dark, heavy colouring seems, indeed, to be of a different nature to that almost vanished tinting; and as these south aisle bosses are specially mentioned as specimens

of 'oil painting' in a paper by Col. W. Harding, *On Painting in Distemper and Fresco*,* there is evidently a recognizable technical distinction between the colouring of these and the other bosses of the Cathedral. Probably the original colouring of all those that we have already been considering was executed in tempera, or distemper. Prof. F. M. Simpson, in his *History of Architectural Development*, Vol. II., p. 119, explains that 'Before oil became the general medium for mural decoration early in the fourteenth century, work not executed in fresco was done in tempera, fixed sometimes with a final coat of oil. Tempera differs mainly from fresco in being applied to a dry surface and not to a damp one. Sometimes the work was done direct on stone, but more often a thin coat of stucco was laid first, as this afforded a more even and satisfactory surface to work on and prevented absorption.'

No. 135.

This confirms the theory that these bosses, which have retained their colour so very much better than any of the earlier ones, are some of the early examples of the use of real oil painting for decoration; and the oil mentioned in the *Fabric Roll* for 1308-9 (see Freeman, Note 41) as supplied for the colouring of the vaults was merely that of linseed oil which was used as a final coat for the preservation of the tempera painting.

The first of the heads, No. 135, is crowned, and must be intended for Queen Eleanor of Castile, for the absence of the wimple and the disposal of the hair at the sides of the face in abundant curls corresponds to the description of her we referred to above (p. 81) and not to that of any other Queen of the period of the Cathedral sculpture.

* See *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, Vol. IV., pt. I.

We cannot but regret that the artist has failed to make the good Queen attractive. Doubtless he intended the broad and clown-like smile to be most fascinating and sweet, but in reality he has succeeded in producing little short of a leer, and the narrow eyes suggest a crafty and treacherous nature rather than such as won the love of the whole nation by its signal faithfulness and virtue. The ugly tufts of hair on the upper lip and chin (though distinctly a Spanish trait) are probably greatly exaggerated. One feels that this is an absolutely inartistic portrait, seizing only the prominent and outward characteristics of the face, and missing all that lay behind of charm and nobility.

No. 136.

This head has hitherto generally been spoken of as that of Isabella of France, the wicked wife of Edward II. Very likely its unattractive aspect has been the chief cause of this tradition. But, besides the strong evidence that it must be intended for Eleanor, a fact that should not be overlooked is that Isabella was only a girl of fifteen when she was married and crowned with her husband in 1308; and, even if these bosses were not of earlier date than that, no one could maintain that the mature, coarse face here portrayed could have been intended for that of a child of fifteen.

By the same tradition the next boss, No. 136, has been called a portrait of Roger Mortimer, Isabella's favourite and fellow-conspirator. This assumption has, in reality, no evidence to support it. Undoubtedly it is a detestable face: coarse, sensual and brutal. But unless we had some authentic portrait of Mortimer whereby to identify it, these characteristics alone do not warrant the conclusion. Apart from the tradition, we should not have hesitated to say

that this was one of those grotesque foliate masks of which we have already met with several specimens, and whose origin we have already explained (*vide supra* pp. 55 and 56, &c.) The eyebrows and moustaches are formed by the stems of the vine, whose leaves completely surround the face in lieu of hair; the coarse, broad nose does duty as the main branch from which the lesser stalks spring, and one leaf entirely occupies the centre of the forehead. The open mouth, too, is characteristic of a mask and its original derivation from that worn by actors.

The last boss of the choir aisles, No. 137, is the already familiar coiled dragon-form of which we had a similar example in the high vault (No. 48). Solitary and brooding, he occupies this position at the south-western extremity of the choir, as if to watch jealously for any unwary souls leaving the holy precincts in an unholy frame of mind.

No. 137.

This boss is usually pointed out as a representation of his Satanic Majesty himself, but there is not anything which really distinguishes it from the other examples of the same class of symbolical demonic form except its colour. The peculiar darkness of the stone, as well as the absolute obscurity of its position, confirms the impression of its being a very Prince of Darkness; and, in truth, to the unaided eye so invisible is the whole subject that whatever title was assigned to it by guide-book or cicerone on the spot, might easily be taken on trust by the casual visitor. To obtain even our accompanying somewhat indistinct illustration has been a matter of no small difficulty.

This same black colour is essentially associated with things evil. Milton speaks of 'the sooty flag of Acheron,'

and blackness and ugliness are naturally enough characteristic of sin. The old legend of King Edward the Confessor, who was supposed to be endowed with a kind of spiritual second sight, tells how he saw a black devil astride the barrel containing the Danegeld money:—

> Vit un diable saer desus
> Le tresor, *noir* et hidus.
>
> *Life of S. Edward*, I., 944.

The type, however, is essentially the mediaeval conception, with Pan-like, pointed ears, and draconic pinions.

We now enter upon a rather later period of carving, and our examples of it, from the remaining portion of the choir high vault, will fully support the conclusion that, even if this part of the vault was begun while Bitton was still in office, it can hardly have been finished until the episcopate of his successor Stapeldon (1308-26) was already some years old.

In the *Fabric Roll* of the years 1316-17 there is an entry of payment for the painting of seventeen great bosses:—'In 17 magnis clavib. de petra primand. et apprestand. usque ad aurum 20s.' FREEMAN speaks of these (see Note 56 in his Appendix) as the bosses of the choir aisles; but this must be a mistake, for there are not precisely seventeen bosses in the choir aisles in whatever way they are counted, and it is not clear that more than a select few of them ever were coloured or gilded. The odd number, seventeen, however, does correspond to the number of bosses used in the two westernmost bays of the choir high vault, from Nos. 105 to 121 inclusive. As may be seen by a reference to the plan, the tiny west bay, which holds the organ-screen and is such an uncommon feature in the plan of the Cathedral, has only seven bosses in its vaulting, instead of the ten of a full-sized bay; and it is with this tiny bay that the coloured bosses end. It would, therefore, seem most likely that this date, 1316-17, when Stapeldon had been eight or nine years in office, marks the completion of the western half of the choir high vault, the carving of which might be, perhaps, even five years earlier. This brings the date of the *carving*, with which we are concerned here, to somewhere about the year 1311; though, of course, without more actual records

it is impossible to fix the workshop dates accurately within a few years.

It is possible, also, that the extract from the *Fabric Roll* of 1303-4, quoted in FREEMAN'S Note 35, has some bearing on this part of the work. Mr. Freeman interprets this in a way that neither the numbers nor the variations in style will justify, The extract reads:—'In 30 magnis clavibus talliand., £7 10s.; pro clave, 5s.' Thirty bosses is just the number of the three western bays before the 'organ-screen' bay—which may well have been a separate work. If these were carved as the *Fabric Roll* suggests, that would allow of their being ready to be put in place by the end of Bitton's episcopacy or the beginning of Stapeldon's.

The change of style which we notice in the western choir is equally manifest in the great corbels of its vaulting-shafts, beginning at the same point in the structure. The corbels would be carved *in situ*, and are, therefore, not necessarily contemporary in design with the structure of which they form a part. Not improbably they were executed even later than the bosses, but this we shall have to discuss more fully in a subsequent chapter.

The chief points of difference in style are seen, first, in the arrangement of the foliage, and, second, in the actual forms of the leaves.

With reference to the first point, we notice that all geometric reminiscences are now entirely absent, and the prevailing ideal seems to be that of a more or less naturally arranged, continuous wreath. The absolute naturalism shown in such subjects as No. 140 (illustrated on p. 36) has already given place to a somewhat more self-conscious effort in design. Whether or no this part of the vault-carving is from the same hand as the earlier portion is not recorded, and the changing style might have been the result of a development in the artist himself under the influences he received from contemporary work in other places, or it may indicate a change of head-carvers in the workshop.

Obvious and self-conscious effort in design, which is properly the antithesis of wholesome restraint, is invariably the first symptom of decadence in any branch of art. An

artist may recast, amplify, or curtail his original design to a large extent, in accordance with generally recognized, or inwardly acknowledged laws of design; but the original thought must flow freely from him irrespective of its ultimate, finished presentment. When this principle is transgressed and the laws and conventions of design become the primary consideration, whilst its motive has but the second place, a fatal step has been taken which must soon lead to an unmeaning repetition of forms, a general monotony and degeneracy of style.

Unhappily, we have in Exeter vaulting a very forcible example of the application of this principle. Consequently, from this point onwards, although we shall find much to admire and still more to interest us in the carvings under consideration, we shall not henceforth have before us artistic work combining such truthful naturalism in design with architectural and technical appropriateness in execution as that with which we have already dealt.

This tendency to an increase of self-conscious effort in design is not peculiar to the Exeter carving of this date. In work of other contemporary buildings we find that the 'later Decorated' style was certainly setting in by this time, and its advent is everywhere marked by this characteristic. For confirmatory evidence we might refer the reader to the quotation on p. 27 from Sir Gilbert Scott.

As regards the second point noticeable in the change of style—the actual forms of the leaves—the contrast to the preceding period of carving is even more obvious. It is often no longer easy to determine what plants have been taken as models for the designs; and they have less *free-play*, so to speak, in their growth, being regarded by the carver evidently more from a purely decorative point of view than with reference to their natural characteristics. The vine is still freely employed as a motive, but now only for its leaves, and these are treated in a distinctly conventionalized form. The natural undulations of the leaf surface are greatly exaggerated, and either become violent ripples with an artificial regularity or are turned into knob-like excrescences in the surface. The most frequent form is that of a leaf with a very prominent central knob or lump, from which the rest spreads out towards the edges,

which, in their turn, are either curled up or raised into a number of smaller lumps just before the extreme points are reached. Fig. 4 is a photograph of leaf-carving from the Bishop's Throne, which is of about the same date and well illustrates this favourite form. Fig. 5 (from the same source) shows others in which the new characteristics are in full display. In these two examples the workmanship is so excellent and artistic that one feels the loss of naturalism has hardly gone far enough to be displeasing in decorative design. But for the vault bosses we cannot say quite as much; the work is of a rougher and coarser nature than that of the throne, and the craftsman

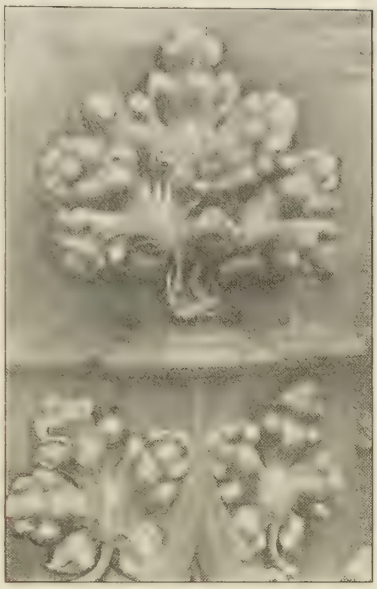


Fig. 4.

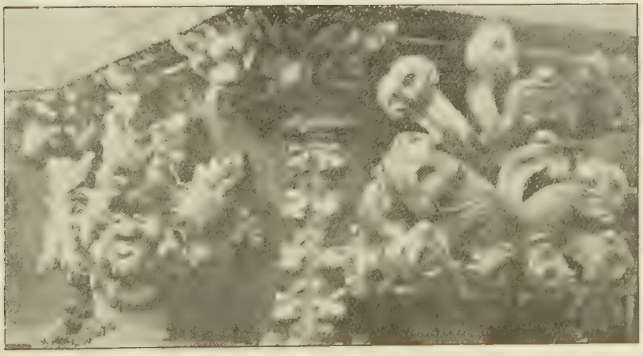


Fig. 5.

was evidently less of an artist. In some of them we find the leaves show a decided tendency to angularity of outline;

this is the first appearance of a characteristic which afterwards developed into the deliberately squared forms of foliage which are so familiar in work of the early Perpendicular period. The repetition of the much be-knobbed form of leaf in these bosses is so persistent that it produces an effect of great monotony and suggests poverty of artistic impulse. The work, however, is still bold and the relief of the carving good; but the general impression is far less interesting than that of the earlier work, and the gilding with which the foliage is so unsparingly enriched adds to the heaviness and artificiality of its appearance.

No. 86.

Some writers place the point of cleavage between the purer naturalistic style of carving and the later decadent conventionalism at the time of the visitation of the Black Death in England. This enables them to account somewhat plausibly for the marked change by a partial loss of masonic tradition during the long interruption of building operations caused by this scourge. But the Exeter vault clearly shows that the decadence was well in progress and the seeds already sown of all the special characteristics of the lifeless foliage-carving of the Perpendicular period, many years before the Black Death swept away craftsmen all over the country. This was in 1349; and the choir vaulting of Exeter was entirely finished before the murder of Bishop Stapeldon in 1326.

The first boss of this new series, No. 86, shows the later characteristics of leaf-treatment, which we have been describing, already fully pronounced. The contrast with the earlier style is emphasized by its position next to No. 85 (already illustrated, p. 76), in which there is no symptom of the coming change.

No. 87 is also worthy of notice as a specimen of a design that is frequently employed in these western bays. It is repeated no less than four times in the two first bays of this portion of the vault. We may call it a coiled wreath; the foliage closely follows a spiral line of stem which is like the curl of a volute or the interior of a shell. Nos. 88 and 93, at the north and south extremities of the cross ridge, whose intersection is marked by No. 87, are practically replicas of it.

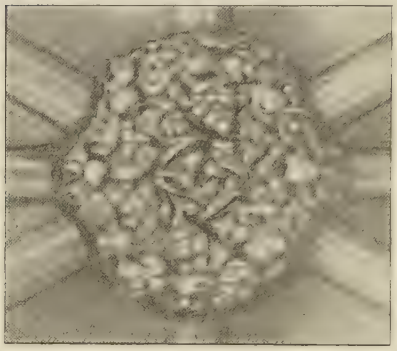
No. 87.

Many other wreath designs have almost hollow centres, or, at least, centres occupied only by stems which are now curled round rather than radiating from the centre. Examples are in Nos. 91, 94 and 104, of which we illustrate No. 91 as a typical specimen.

No. 91.

Even in the less wreath-like, more closely covered bosses, of which No. 97 is a typical example, we still observe an almost invariable 'working-round' of the foliage, which is a distinct feature of this style, in which stems and branches are more and more neglected, until the thick and crowded leafage seems to form the whole design. This characteristic of the period is seen in the treatment of foliage on capitals

of an even earlier date, of which examples may be found at Selby Abbey, Yorkshire; Southwell Chapter-house (*circa* 1300); Carlisle choir piers (*circa* 1300); and elsewhere.



No. 97.

No. 97 is also a good specimen of the type of leaf described above (p. 90) with the large central knob and exaggerated undulations.

There is one signal exception to the prevailing wreath motive in this section of the vaulting. In the very large boss, No. 107, in the centre of the westernmost large bay, the foliage radiates like a star from the centre, but soon loses any definite form in the maze of small lumps and crumplings on the outer parts of the leaves.

This somewhat lengthy exposition of the character of the foliage designs in these four western bays will take the place of any examination of them in numerical order because the majority of the designs are of foliage. Perhaps this collective treatment is sufficient in a case where a detailed enumeration would necessarily involve so much mere repetition. There is not a single figure subject in the whole of this portion of the vaulting, with the exception of a few half-figures forming the lateral half-bosses in bays, and in the whole bosses the only exceptions to the prevailing foliage designs are Nos. 89, 92, 112, 117, 118 and 120, all of which are masks.

No. 107.

No. 89 is a grotesque mask of rather jovial aspect. The hair is very peculiarly arranged, one portion being brushed straight over the forehead, whilst the hair at the sides of the face is arranged in formal, heavy ringlets; the upper lip and chin are clean-shaven and the 'mutton-chop' whiskers thus left are arranged in small ringlets also. The whole effect is distinctly grotesque, but it is quite possible that a serious portrait was intended. So many mediaeval artists failed in form and expression, and sought to remedy this by giving special prominence to the peculiar characteristics of the subjects they wished to represent. As Mr. Wright observes in his *History of Caricature and Grotesque in Art*, 'much of what we now call caricature was then characteristic of serious art and of what was considered its high development.' We have no clue to the identity of the sitter if this was intended as a portrait. We note an exaggerated coarseness in the moulding of the features; the broad nose, heavy jowl and thick lips.

No. 89.

No. 92.

The same coarseness is also apparent in the broad face and blunt features of No. 92, where a shaven upper lip, side curls and a ringletted beard are the distinctive characteristics of this face surmounted by a royal crown. It is probably intended for a portrait of Edward II., whom Stapeldon served with such ill-fated loyalty.

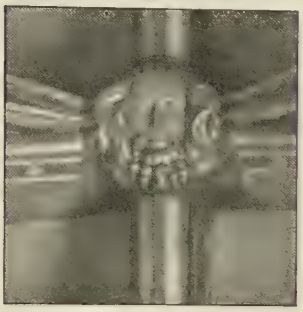
No. 95, on the central ridge, is again a Queen's head, wearing the wimple, with somewhat coarse features. The boss is pierced with three holes, probably for the chains by which the chandelier was formerly suspended. If the portrait in No. 92 is intended for Edward II, this may be meant for his Queen, Isabella of France. Miss Strickland describes her from her effigy in Westminster Abbey as having a remarkably broad, low head; as being 'very like her mother, but her features are pretty with a laughing expression.' But this description is of no great service in identification, as we cannot attach much importance to effigies as portraits. Miss Strickland adds that 'she wears a crown on the top of her hood, her veil hangs on each side of her face, the widow's barb appears half covering her chin.' In some respects this description is not dissimilar to the present subject; the 'widow's barb' is a misleading phrase, for if all were widows who had their chins half-covered, none but widows were honoured in sculpture for a long period. The 'barb' was a separate article of attire, worn below the chin, not over it.

No. 95.

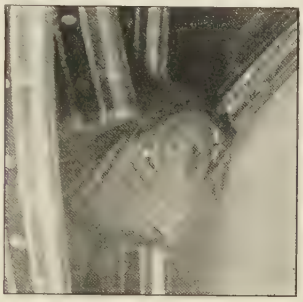
No. 112.

In all these heads it will be noticed that the type of face has changed considerably; but not more so than the type of foliage. It may be that this is an indication that the carvers followed a fashion in faces as well as in foliage.

The same characteristic type is seen also in No. 112, which is simply a foliate mask with the stems of the foliage issuing from the open mouth in the usual manner. The broad,



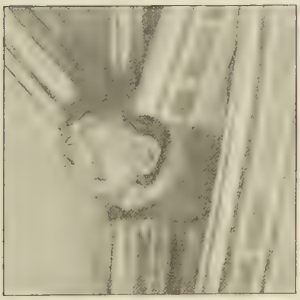
No. 116.



No. 117.

clownish type of face makes the mask more bacchanalian than ever. The knobby leaves of the conventional foliage are well evidenced here.

Nos. 116, 117 and 120 are three small heads from the miniature bay; they are similar in character to those which we have in the other western bays and do not call for any special comment, nor have we any conjectural identifications to offer. No. 116, on the central ridge, is a masculine mask with a beard in heavy ringlets; to the north No. 117 is again a man with clean shaven face, and on the south No. 120 is a female head.



No. 120.

We cannot trace in the subjects in this part of the vault any of the symbolic meanings which abounded in the presbytery bays: for the time, at least, symbolism seems to have been entirely absent from the mind of the designer. In the work of the first bay of the nave—obviously by another hand, though nearly contemporary—it reappears in full force.

In these western bays of the high vault two of the half-bosses which terminate the cross-ridges at the apex of the windows are small masks with arms supporting the ribs. We give an illustration of No. 93a, a woman's face, crowned, apparently quite conventional in type. The other, No. 108a, is simply a conventional type of face without any significant detail, similarly placed and executed. They seem devoid of any individual meaning or interest.

No. 93a.

CHAPTER V.

The Bosses of the Chapels of SS. Paul and John the Baptist, and of the North and South Towers.

The sculpture most closely allied in design and execution to that discussed in our last chapter is to be found in the vaults of the two chapels, dedicated respectively to S. Paul and S. John the Baptist, which flank the eastern wall of the north and south transepts. Indeed, judging from the class of subjects selected and the general style of their treatment, it seems probable that these vaults, if placed chronologically, ought to come before rather than after the western bays of the choir high-vault. But as the records are silent on this point, and as it is known that the builders completed the vaulting at their leisure, independent of other constructive works and influenced simply by convenience or contemporary wishes, we thought it best to complete the illustration of the whole choir before considering any parts westward of the structural division of the Cathedral.

The first point to be noticed in the carving of the bosses of these chapels is the mixture of the characteristics of the earlier and later fourteenth-century styles. We had occasion to discriminate between these styles in dealing with the earlier and later portions of the choir high-vault, where the change is apparently abrupt and complete. These transeptal chapels supply some illustrations of the actual transition, and therefore require somewhat close attention.

In the matter of subject, we find all three classes (see p. 10)—pictorial, decorative and symbolical—represented. They are distributed in fairly equal proportions, unlike the western choir bays, where design had become almost entirely limited to foliage with only a few portraits and masks to vary their monotony. Another indication of earlier date is in the arrangement of the foliage, which retains much more freedom, grace and variety than is exhibited in the western choir. More stalks are visible, the close wreath design does not recur so frequently, and the nature of the foliage

employed is generally recognizable. In addition to the predominant vine with its fruit, the maple, the rose and the oak are again clearly in evidence, as in the earliest bosses of the Lady Chapel and in the presbytery. In a few instances, however, one might almost think the bosses were from the very hand that carved the work of the western choir bays (for example, Nos. 157 and 165 in S. John the Baptist's Chapel); and in many cases the leaves are of a very undulatory type, sometimes with the central lump or knob well developed, but never to the same exaggerated extent as in the western choir work.

No. 142.

Keeping in mind these general considerations, we may proceed to a more detailed examination of these two vaults, taking first the bosses of the northern chapel, S. Paul's, Nos. 142 to 156.

Beginning at the eastern end of the central ridge, we have in No. 142 a very small foliate mask almost buried in the large leafage that springs from its mouth. Here the foliage is of a conventional and 'lumpy' character. The mask, like that which we shall presently examine in No. 149, shows a considerable divergence from the type which we have previously described as 'foliate masks.' In them the face was regarded as of chief importance and the foliage issuing from it was merely accessory; here the original idea has developed into what might more accurately be described as a foliage boss, in which a small mask forms the centre. The distinctive feature that is common to them all is the sprouting of the main stems of the foliage from the mouth of the mask, and this at once proclaims their common origin which we have already traced (see pp. 55, 56).

No. 143 is one of the two large-sized bosses in the chapel, each of which masks the intersection of the diagonal ribs with the ridge ribs in the centre of a bay. This one occupies

the place of honour nearest the altar, and therefore displays for its subject an effigy of S. Paul, to whom the chapel is dedicated. He is represented according to the usual type employed for this apostle, as an elderly, bald-headed man of short stature, holding a sword in the right hand and a book in the left. It is noteworthy that the apostle is holding the sword by the point with the hilt raised above his shoulder. More frequently he is portrayed leaning on the hilt of the sword, whilst its point rests on the ground—as in the representation of this apostle on the modern 'Martyr's pulpit' in the nave. According to Mrs. Jameson, the peculiarity of a sword held by its point is usually distinctive of representations of S. Matthias; when dealing with the subject she refers to a picture in the Florence Gallery by Cosimo Roselli, in which S. Matthias is thus depicted, and adds 'what might be the intention of the painter it is not now possible to guess.' The apostle on this boss is undoubtedly S. Paul and not S. Matthias, and the sword is here two-edged, which suggests that it is not the symbol of his martyrdom but the weapon which he wielded as a 'good soldier of Christ Jesus,' described by him in his Epistle to the Ephesians as 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God' (Eph. vi, 17). This is specifically described as a 'two-edged sword' in Heb. iv, 12, and might be used here as emblematic of S. Paul's distinguished career as a preacher and teacher of the Word of God. Walcott, in his *Sacred Archaeology*, observes 'a sword is the symbol of martyrdom, but the peculiar emblem of S. Paul.' Possibly the unusual position of the sword is

No. 143.

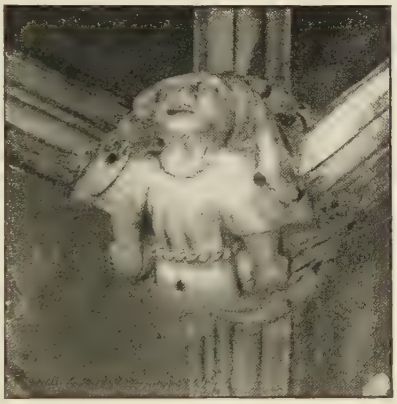
connected with this meaning of the emblem as distinguished from the sword of martyrdom. This conjecture is supported by another remark of Mrs. Jameson's: 'When S. Paul is leaning on the sword, it expresses his martyrdom; when he holds it aloft, it expresses also his warfare in the cause of Christ.'* The sides of the pedestal of the Early English tomb of Bishop Marshall (d. 1206) in the choir of Exeter Cathedral are sculptured in panels, and one of the panels on the western end, occupied by a seated figure of S. Paul, again shows this peculiar position of the sword (see Fig. 6); here, as in the boss, it is a two-edged sword. Dr. Oliver, in his *Lives of the Bishops of Exeter* (p. 211), describing this tomb, remarks, 'here occurs the earliest instance we have met with of S. Paul holding the sword by the point.' On either side of S. Paul's figure on the boss are sprays of blossoming roses, arranged and carved with much grace and freedom, though there are distinct traces of lumpiness in the leaves. They are probably used here as in so many of the bosses (cf. Nos. 30, 66, 131, 169) without any special symbolic reference and merely as a beautiful subject for decorative design. Roses, however, are significant of martyrdom, and it may be with this reference that they surround S. Paul. In the transepts, too, we are specially reminded of Bishop Quivil's work, and that his coat of arms included 'two roses in chief.' In point of style and execution this boss might well rank with several

Fig. 6.

* *Sacred and Legendary Art*, Vol. I., p. 188.

in the presbytery vault, though there are precisely those traces of the coming conventionalism which hint that it was carved only just before the work of the western choir.

No. 144, on the cross-ridge of the same bay, is a half-length figure of a man. The head and face are turned upwards to such an extent that they are scarcely visible from the floor; he is gazing directly out on the north through the window, and his expression, emphasized by a mouth drawn all awry, is that of one who sees unpleasant things. Perhaps this is to express the malefic influences which hover on the northern side, the abode of Lucifer. The boss is pierced with three holes, one on either shoulder and one below the waist, perhaps for suspending a lamp. He is clad in a tunic with loose sleeves and gathered in at the waist with an ornamental cincture that is almost like a chain. Below the waist this garment divides and curls backwards in folds that develop into the broad, flat foliage which completes the boss. His hands grasp two bunches of these folds, and thus he helps, as it were, to support the adjacent ribs. His expression and attitude, as though he were striving to escape through the northern window, and the chain-like girdle, suggest a messenger of evil caught within the sacred precincts and compelled to remain and serve by sustaining the vaulting of the chapel.



No. 144.

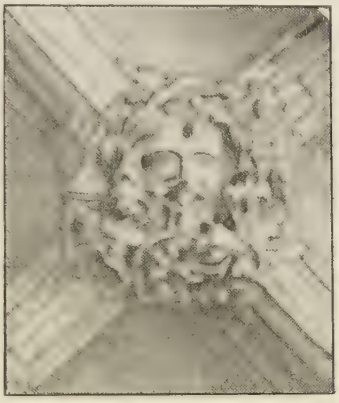
Nos. 145 and 147 are merely conventional examples of foliage, though distinguished by a certain grace of design that conventional work often lacks. No. 146 is a head of an unusual type, wearing a very curious cap, and with upraised hands, supporting the vaulting-ribs on either side of his head. This attitude has been illustrated before by the

bishop (No. 59) and the archbishop (No. 73) in the presbytery vault. The hands also, like theirs, are displaying embroidered gloves,* and the prominent collar of the cope is another indication of episcopal dress. The cap does not at first sight suggest a mitre, but in some of the earlier representations of bishops a very similar head-dress may be found portrayed. A twelfth-century portrait of an archbishop occurs in a French MS. where both the shape and ornamentation of his mitre are almost identical with this one. Evidently, then, it was here intended to represent a bishop, and it would seem as if some early painting, probably from a manuscript, had been taken as a model for the head. Beyond this suggestion of a copy of some early picture—which would surely only be copied if some definite person was to be commemorated—there is nothing to warrant the conclusion that portraiture was attempted. Indeed, the harsh, rugged and unskilful treatment of the features is conspicuously unlike that exhibited by the various portraits we have previously considered. It may be meant for a portrait of William Warelwast, the third bishop of the See (1107-36), to whom is accredited the beginning of the building of the original Norman cathedral, and with whose date the costume—in particular the early form of the mitre—would agree. His introduction here, in close connection with the massive Norman towers, would be distinctly appropriate. In support of this very conjectural identification, we may note

No. 146.

*The Council of Poitiers (A.D. 999) confined the wearing of 'sandals, rings and gloves' to bishops. Gloves were much worn by bishops during and subsequent to the twelfth century. They typified the hiding of iniquity by the merits of our Saviour (cf. WALCOTT'S *Sacred Archaeology*).

that in Dr. Oliver's reproductions of the episcopal seals of Exeter, Warelwast and Bartholomew Iscanus are the only two bearded bishops portrayed. But the mitre in the latter's time has assumed the familiar shape, though not its height.



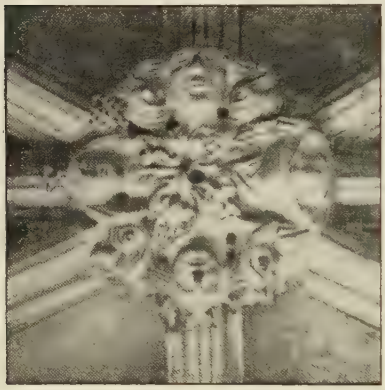
No. 149.

Returning to the main ridge, No. 148 is a foliage boss freely designed and excellently carved, followed by No. 149, the small foliate mask embowered in foliage referred to above, but differing from No. 142 in that the foliage here (which is maple) is far more naturalistic. There are three holes bored in this boss, very probably for the suspension of a censer to swing in the very centre of the chapel.

No. 150 is a head with refined and well-cut brow, eyes and nose. The disc-like background is in reality a triradiate nimbus surrounding the face. The representation must, therefore, be intended for one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. When its position in close proximity to S. Paul is considered, and its noticeable attitude, as of one looking down from above, it seems probable that it represents the risen Chirst as seen by S. Paul in his vision on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts iv.) A very peculiar detail is that the mouth below the upper lip ends in a kind of open shell-shaped gap from which flows a curled beard. Probably this was done to conceal some flaw or fracture in the original carving.

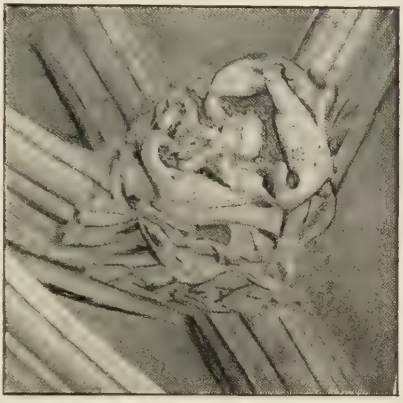
No. 150.

Next in order upon the central ridge is No. 151, the second of the large bosses. It is a fresh rendering of the already familiar subject of four masks of which we had examples in No. 18 in the Lady Chapel and in No. 77 in the presbytery high vault (see pp. 22 and 69.) They are, as usual, arranged at the cardinal points of the compass in a setting of foliage. It is difficult to discern much of the character of the faces, owing to the angle at which they are turned upwards; but we can see that the two looking north and south are women, the one to the north having a kerchief or veil hanging on either side of her face, and the southern one being enveloped in a wimple of the wider and looser pattern which preluded its disuse. The two others with more strongly marked features and devoid of any head-covering are doubtless male masks, though the length and luxuriance of their curling side-locks is scarcely masculine to a modern eye. A vine again encompasses the whole, carrying one prominent branch of fruit, and its central leaf is of the type illustrated in the last chapter (see Fig. 4, p. 91.) This boss, again, is pierced with one central and three surrounding holes, possibly for the suspension of a chandelier to light the chapel. As we have noted before, there are similar holes disfiguring several of the other bosses in this chapel and in other parts of the Cathedral; there are four also in the web of the vault here, and many in that of the choir aisles. Like piercings occur in the vaulting of Ottery S. Mary Church, and have occasioned much discussion respecting their purpose. Whilst some were doubtless made for the suspension of lights, this would hardly explain the number and position of all. The suggestion most easy of acceptance is that they were made to ensure better ventilation of the vault and so keep it well dried.



No. 151.

Several very graceful birds are the subject of No. 152, which is at the northern end of the western cross-ridge. They pre not of any very distinctive type, but are probably intended for doves, used from very early Christian times as emblems of believers. They are engaged, as we so often find them, in feeding amongst foliage of an undistinguishable and conventional nature. In the middle ages the dove —in addition to its primary employment as a symbol of the Holy Spirit — had three distinct secondary symbolic meanings. As the dove of Noah it signified rest, as the dove of David it signified peace, and as the dove of Christ it signified salvation (see Evans, *Animal Symbolism*, p. 76). It is probably with this last signification that it is introduced into the decoration of the vault of this chapel dedicated to S. Paul, the great apostle of the doctrines of salvation.

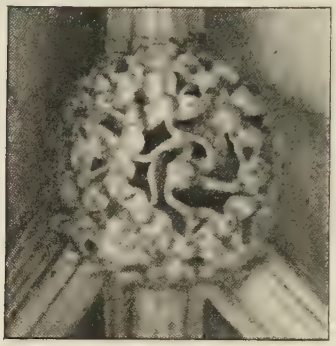


No. 152.

No. 153.

On the next boss, No. 153, we again meet with a siren in the form of a mermaid, whose symbolism was explained on p. 62. She is holding a fish in her left hand (Rev. R. J. E. Boggis in his *Exeter Cathedral* incorrectly states that it is a looking-glass), which symbolizes the soul in the grip of earthly passions; in her right hand she grasps her tail—as on the presbytery boss. This is a favourite attitude for these amphibious creatures:

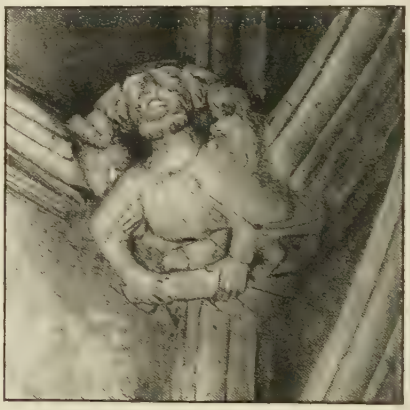
on a thirteenth-century font at Anstey, Herts (illustrated in Mr. F. Bond's *Fonts and Font-Covers*), and on another at S. Peter's, Cambridge, decorated with two mermen, they are all similarly represented with their tails grasped in their hands. The mermaid and the two mermen on the Exeter *subsellia*, however, are not so portrayed. The attitude of this mermaid in S. Paul's Chapel lacks the grace of the earlier example in the presbytery vault, and her figure is not modelled with the same delicacy and sense of form; but her features are clearer and not without some claim to beauty.



No. 154.

The foliage boss which follows, No. 154, has no specially noteworthy characteristics, except that although the undercutting is deep and good, the leaves have the exaggerated undulations and knobs of the conventional type.

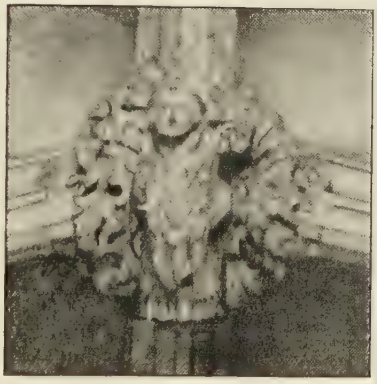
No. 155 is a half-figure of a man, of the same type as No. 144, but showing more of the face to the observer below. He has rugged features and a short beard. The curious garb in which he is presented almost suggests a piece of armour—a sort of breastplate with extensions from each shoulder reaching to the elbow—worn over a close-fitting tunic. There is no detail which permits one to assert that armour is intended, nor does his attire correspond to any particular fashion typical of the period.



No. 155.

A deep, embroidered belt encircles his waist—the pointed end of it is visible on the right. His hands clasp what at first sight seems to be a fold of this belt, but a close inspection will show that it is one of his legs, which are crossed beneath him and reduced in size in an utterly disproportionate fashion in order to accommodate them to the dimensions of the boss. A further curious detail is the exaggeration of the curling locks of his hair on either side of his face; they look almost exactly like a couple of ostrich feathers curled round.

The last boss in this chapel, No. 156, displays against a background of large leaves a small full-length figure of a bishop. He is contemporary as to mitre and dress with the date at which we consider the vault to have been executed. His shaven face suggests that it may be Bishop Thomas Bitton, who had not long been dead, but the living occupant of the See, Stapeldon, was also shaven, and perhaps this is intended for a portrait of him, though we cannot recognize any special resemblance to the effigy on Stapeldon's grand tomb at the north side of the altar. In his left hand he carries a crozier, leaving his right free, as usual, to be raised in benediction.



No. 156.

The chapel of S. John the Baptist in the south transept corresponds exactly in size and position to S. Paul's in the north. There is a point of difference in the vaulting: here it is left unplastered, whereas in S. Paul's it is plastered between the ribs, as in all the eastern limb of the Cathedral except the chapels of SS. Andrew and James.

What principle, if any, governed these distinctions is not now ascertainable. In mediaeval ecclesiastical buildings generally it was customary to plaster the inside masonry of walls, vaults, and all. The bare, coarsely-pointed masonry

often to be seen nowadays in the interiors of churches that have been subjected to modern 'restorations' is, as a matter of fact, anything but a return to the methods of the middle ages. In the nave vaulting of Westminster Abbey the pale 'clunch' of which the web is mainly constructed is varied at regular intervals by bands of a darker, stronger stone, producing what Sir Gilbert Scott, in his *Lectures on Mediaeval Architecture* (Vol. I, pp. 179-80), termed 'constructive polychromy.' But his son, writing a few years later, says that from some few facts which had then recently come to light 'it would appear that in spite of the so-called "constructional polychrome" of its vaultings, the *whole* interior was—with the exception, of course, of those portions which were executed in the Purbeck marble—*distempered white, and "stoned" in red lines.*'* How the vaults of Exeter nave were originally treated is not recorded. In such accounts of Sir Gilbert Scott's restoration as are now available it is only mentioned that he removed white or coloured wash from them; but an eye-witness of the restoration work, who was greatly interested in it and often at the Cathedral in conversation with the clerk of the works, informs us definitely that it was plaster that previously covered the filling-in of the vault between the ribs. Evidently Sir Gilbert Scott believed that its original state was as we now see it, with all the masonry of the web clearly visible. But as he had erroneously come to the same conclusion respecting the Westminster nave vaults, he was probably mistaken here also; and its plastered condition was according to the original intention of its builders.

In descriptive accounts of Exeter Cathedral admiration has often been expressed for the variety of colour exhibited in the masonry of the nave vaults, where the local dark 'trap' of which it is mainly constructed is varied irregularly by blocks and courses of the light, yellowish Beer freestone. One is inclined to suspect that the sonorous phrase 'constructive polychromy' has seduced the writers into this chorus of approval. To a wholly unprejudiced eye it scarcely seems an additional charm to have these mere patches of contrast, observing no order and emphasizing

* See *Essay on the History of English Church Architecture*, p. 145.

no arrangement of light and shade. In fact, the first impression they would naturally produce is that extensive repairs had at some time been carried out in a different stone to the original. This, we know, is not the case; and so they certainly suggest that the web-masonry was not intended in the first instance to remain visible but to be clothed with a seemly coat of plaster.

In their present condition the vault of S. Paul's Chapel is the last with which we shall meet in which the plaster has been retained; and this fact has tempted us into this digression.

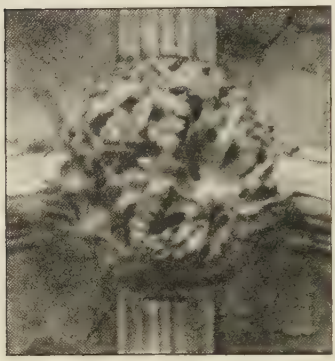
In the bosses of S. John the Baptist's Chapel traces of gilding and colour are still discernible; in S. Paul's there are scarcely any signs; only in one or two places in the carving some pinkish stains still show where the colour-wash has not been entirely removed. But we have no reason for suggesting that they never were coloured. It is more probable that the vigorous cleaning removed all traces of the paint, as it has done in some of the bosses in the south aisle of the nave, which stand out in such strong contrast to their neighbours that they almost look like recent repairs. Traces of both colour and gilding are much in evidence on several of the more important bosses in the nave, but the re-painting and gilding at the restoration was confined to the eastern limb of the Cathedral.

No. 169.

In S. John the Baptist's Chapel the purely foliage designs outnumber those of the other classes of subject. There are nine of them and as most of them are alike in style and treatment it will not be necessary to examine each in detail. Conspicuous among them as still representing the more naturalistic style of carving is the rose boss (No. 169); and on the same cross-ridge the oak foliage in No. 168 is similar in style; the natural characteristics

of the leaf are retained, and the acorns are excellent reproductions of nature.

In the remaining foliage bosses, though the treatment is decidedly conventional, the undulations are moderate, the leaves have individual character, and where the vine appears (No. 163) it bears bunches of fruit; the arrangement is graceful and varied, in contrast to the stereotyped monotony that pervades the western vaults of the choir; and the carving is well undercut and in good relief. We illustrate Nos. 163 and 169 as representative of the two methods of treatment.



No. 163.

In the figure subjects of this chapel there is a great deal of work of an interesting character to be noted.

The first (No. 158) is the large central boss of the eastern bay, where the subject is the Crucifixion. Of this subject in general we have already treated in Ch. III (pp. 50f). It occupies the place of honour here, probably because it was the historic fulfilment of the Baptist's prophetic utterance, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of of the world!' (John i, 29.) The figures are on a small scale, but are executed with considerable care and refinement.

No. 158.

The head of the Christ is but slightly bowed; His body is very emaciated and the knees much bent forward, the legs being crossed practically from the knees downward.

There is less drapery than in the earlier treatment of the subject (No. 57), but it still retains some of that fulness and freedom which is entirely absent in the two latest renderings of the scene that we shall meet with in the nave high vaults and the west doorway. The Virgin stands on the right side of the cross and S. John the Evangelist on the left; both have their heads bowed in grief, and the Virgin's right hand is raised to her cheek in the attitude specially symbolic of woe. A very unsatisfactory effect is produced by the abruptness with which these attendant figures end apparently just below the knees. The cross, too, immediately below our Saviour's feet tapers off into a mere stick resting on nothing and, like the subordinate figures, appears to be slipping off the lower edge of the boss. Perhaps it was found necessary to reduce the size of the keystone after the sculpture had been commenced and a good fit was achieved at the expense of the general effect.

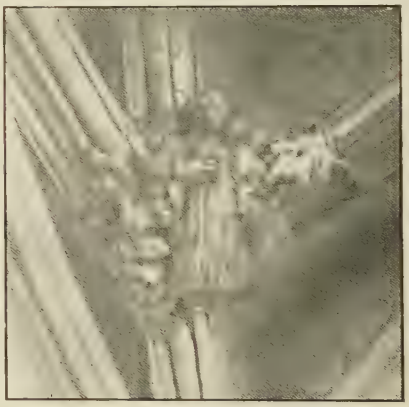
No. 159.

On the ridge crossing the vault at this point the next boss, No. 159, has for its subject a full-length robed figure with head and eyes uplifted. He has an emblem in the left hand which is not a book, but may be a small plaque with some object now obliterated; and a scabbarded sword in the right held by the hilt with the point downwards. His feet, which are bare, are resting upon a small figure lying prone. We have no satisfactory suggestion as to identification. Elijah, as one of the patriarchs, is correctly represented with a sword in his hand and a child near him, but his feet should not be bare. This makes it unlikely that it is intended for the prophet, though he was regarded by the Church as the great prototype of John the Baptist.

No. 160 on the same cross ridge exhibits some unusual features that are not easily discernible except on the brightest summer days and at such times as the vault is well lighted.

The figure is a half-length, robed, with the right hand raised in benediction and the left apparently folded on the breast. The face is slightly bearded and the hair worn long; the head is surrounded by the tri-radiate nimbus which is the distinguishing mark of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Crouching on either side are two roughly carved figures, which seem to be supporting the arms of the principal figure. These two small attendants, one of whom is bearded, are really on the deep sides of the boss, which are continued right back to the web masonry. Probably a representation of Our Lord is intended. We are inclined to think that the two attendant figures are Moses and Elijah, and that the whole boss is symbolic of the Transfiguration. Unfortunately there is no trace of the original colouring, so that the 'raiment white and glistening' cannot be identified. But Our Lord's description of the Baptist, in which he compares him with Elijah, would make such a subject appropriate to the vault of this chapel.

No. 160



No. 162.

No. 162, at the southern end of the same ridge, is a full-length figure corresponding in scale to No. 159 at the northern end. It is evidently the Virgin bearing in her arms the infant Saviour, a subject of which we

shall have more to say in describing some better example. Here design and execution are alike poor and ineffective. The most noteworthy point of the sculpture is that Our Lady has a book in her right hand; this may indicate that the subject of the composition is the 'Mater Sapientiae,' or it may be an allusion to Isa. xxix, 11, 12—usually interpreted as a reference to the Virgin.

All these three bosses (Nos. 159, 160, 162), just described, are noteworthy for their triangular shape, occasioned, doubtless, by the closeness of the ribs at whose intersections they occur, and emphasized by the surrounding foliage or other detail being continued right up to the web on either side of the tierceron ribs, whose junction they mask.

No. 166.

The second large boss (No. 166) is in the centre of the western bay. It is a figure of S. John the Baptist surrounded by an ample quantity of very undulatory foliage. The head is very large in proportion to the rest of the figure; the position of the limbs and the whole attitude is decidedly rude and archaic in treatment, whilst the face, with its very small deep-set eyes, wears an expression of disapproving severity. He is clothed in a rough skin hanging from his shoulders, doubtless the 'raiment of camel's hair' described by the Evangelists Matthew and Mark—though the 'leathern girdle' is absent. His arms, head and legs are quite bare. In his left hand he carries a small model of the Agnus Dei—the Sacred Lamb, bearing the cross and banner of the resurrection—carved in relief upon a small plaque. With his right hand he is pointing to this emblem. This is curiously misdescribed by Hewitt as 'John the Baptist with his head on a charger.' It is,

of course, not unusual to find the Baptist thus supplied with two heads, but in this Exeter example a more appropriate accessory is employed. There is a similar boss, though later in style, at Ottery S. Mary, where the Baptist is shown in much the same attitude, having an Agnus Dei in his left hand and pointing to it with his right. It would appear to signify his great utterance, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' which the other large boss (of the Crucifixion) also illustrates.

The subject of the last boss in the chapel (No. 171) is a lion in combat with a dragon. The lion's hind legs are braced against the side of the rib over which his head and forepaws are stretched, and he has gripped the dragon, which writhes along the other side of the rib, just above its bat-like wings. It symbolizes the triumph of righteousness over evil—the lion's nobler symbolism, which S. Augustine delighted to describe as the Lion of the tribe of Judah overcoming the devil, who is as 'insidious as the dragon.'

No. 171.

The transept vaults under the two Norman towers are of wood, but are carried out on the same scheme as the rest of the vaulting, and evidently belong to the same period as the transept chapels and the crossing bays. The two sets have many points in common. In each there is a large central boss (Nos. 255 and 278), surrounded by a ring of four bosses, three of which are couching or curled-up beasts, whilst the fourth, the one to the south of the central boss in each case, is a human head or a caricature of a human face. The outer ring consists of four foliage bosses (Nos. 253, 256, 259, 261; and 276, 279, 282, 284) closely allied in design and execution to the contemporary stone foliage bosses in the adjoining crossing bays. They present no features with which the reader is not already familiar. The

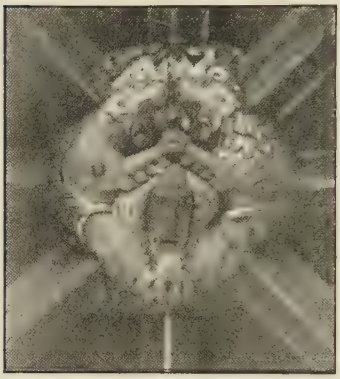
four half-bosses in each tower are also foliage of a similar type. The foliage bosses have been gilded all over; the other subjects were once painted white and gilded in parts. The white has become much discoloured, and in places has scaled off altogether. The hair on the masks is brilliantly gilded, and in the animal forms the manes, the lashes or tufts of the tails, and the long hair down the backs of the legs are all treated in the same manner.

The poor condition of the paint, the ugly splashes of gilding and the darkness of the situation, lighted only through the upper tracery of the north and south windows respectively, combine to make it exceedingly difficult to discern their subjects from the floor, and have rendered their reproduction by photography unusually troublesome.

The carver has evolved quite a zoological curiosity. The animal which figures on these bosses—they have all a strong family resemblance—is unknown alike to the sedate records of natural history and the unfettered imaginations of *Physiologus*. Mr. Cotton boldly calls some of them 'bears,' entirely disregarding the exuberant tails which are displayed so ostentatiously. In default of any real identification, we suggest that they are highly-conventionalized lions and lionesses. It is true that they have very little in common with the comparatively truthful delineations of lions which we find in the stone sculptures; but they must be supposed to have undergone the same regrettable process which produced the lumpy conventional foliage to which no counterpart in the vegetable kingdom can be assigned. Their tails are as the tails of heraldic lions rampant, and their manes bristle until they are almost like a ridge of close-set gilded tongues. There are other details in favour of this identification which will be observed in the course of their description.

The design of the central boss in the north tower (No. 255) consists of two large animals seated astride the ridge ribs, symmetrically arranged with their heads meeting in the foliage above and their forepaws clasped over an elongated male mask with exaggerated curls of hair and beard. The tails of both beasts are curled round their loins and spread out into huge lashes. The one on the western side has a mane, treated more like feathers or scales than

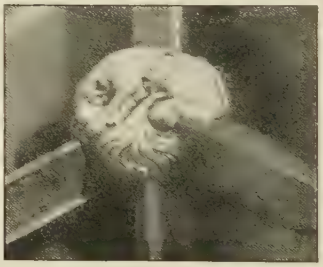
the masses of hair usually given to lions in carvings. The other animal has no mane, but is, save in this respect, precisely similar to its companion. We may therefore conclude that they are intended for a lion and lioness.



No. 255.

This peculiar treatment of the mane is repeated again in this set; it also occurs in one of the bosses of the crossing and once in the first bay of the nave, but nowhere else in the Cathedral. In the two latter instances there are reasons, as we shall show, for regarding it as intentional and symbolic; here none such exist, and it seems more likely to have been the result of unintelligent copying from more significant carvings. It is only one of several characteristics in the carvings of the whole central and transeptal portions of the vault differentiating the work from any of the portions already surveyed or those that follow; and all the evidences go to show that it is not only a different but a far less skilful hand at work.

In the foliage subjects the difference in quality is perhaps not quite so striking; the types reproduced conform to those in use for the decoration of the period—probably the latter part of Stapeldon's episcopate, 1308-26—and, in common with many other contemporary specimens, the designs are lacking in inspiration and the work is poor, blunt, and with but little relief. This applies not only to the wooden bosses of the transept towers, but also to a very considerable extent to the stone bosses of the three crossing bays.

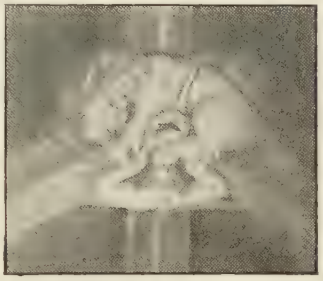


No. 254.

The deterioration is far more apparent in the treatment

of figure subjects. Though there are one or two exceptions, undoubtedly we have in the vaults of the transepts, crossing, and first bay of the nave the very poorest ancient carving in the Cathedral.

The three animal subjects flanking the central boss of the north tower (Nos. 254, 257, 260) are all more or less exaggerated and falsified. They illustrate how closely exaggeration and decadence are allied. We have noted this in the foliage forms in the western bays of the choir high vault (see last chapter), where the undulations of the leaves and twistings of the stems are exaggerated until realism is lost and convention established.



No. 257.

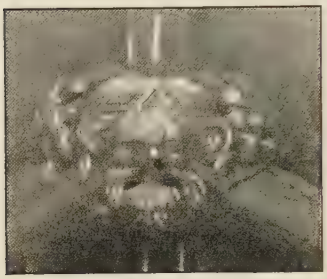
Here we find the same tendency active in the rendering of animal forms. Points naturally characteristic of an animal are seized upon and emphasized until they attain an abnormal and grotesque prominence. Thus, the characteristic hair on the backs of the lions' legs has become almost more important and conspicuous than the legs themselves; the manes flow in overwhelming masses, often distorted in absurd ringlets, and the tufts at the ends of the tails have so increased in size as to cover with their too luxuriant, fan-like tassels almost the whole side of the body when curled round over the back as in some of these instances.

No. 260.

Details such as these reveal the domination of unintelligent conventionality over truth of presentment. They betray the craftsman who, instead of thoughtfully and truthfully representing natural characteristics with the just amount of restrained emphasis requisite for artistic expression, accepts at second hand certain given

points as necessary for the distinction of certain forms, and insists upon these with the inevitable exaggeration of a slavish and inartistic mind.

The lionesses in Nos. 254 and 260 exemplify the tufted tails and legs, and the lion in No. 257 illustrates again the feathered mane and ringletted tail. Additional unreality is given to this boss by the head and disproportionate paws in the lower half, intended, doubtless, to represent a cub. Copied, probably, from a symbolic design—we shall meet with the symbolism later—it only serves to show that the copyist was ignorant of the very symbolism he thus caricatured.



No. 258.

The fourth boss of the central ring (No. 258) is the bearded face of a man between two coarsely carved leaves. The head equals them in coarseness, and is of a most lowering and forbidding aspect. His scowling physiognomy is not improved by the fact that a hole has been pierced through the boss which has destroyed the lower part of his nose. Whether this was done in the indifference of some iconoclastic day, or was a deliberate criticism on the poverty of the carving, who shall say!

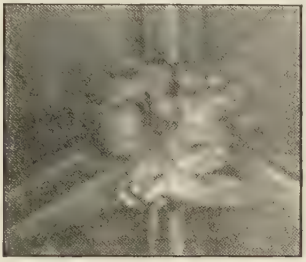
The south tower has a similar series of subjects, though not a repetition of the identical designs.

No. 278.

The central boss (No. 278) has a lion and a cub curled into a circle. The lion's mane, legs and tail exemplify the same conventionalism as in the north tower. A further detail which immediately calls to mind the 'lumpy' peculiarities of conventionalized foliage is the undue prominence given

to the backbone which is carved as a series of swellings. Similar protuberances are carved on its haunch and on its

No. 277.

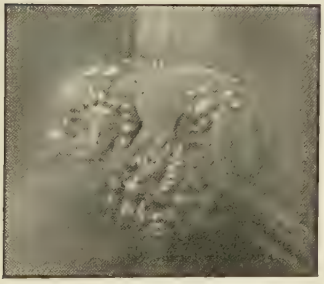


No. 280.

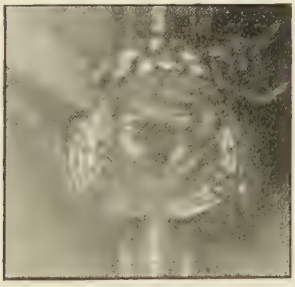
body in various places. The unskilfulness of the carver and his lack of direct observation of living animals is very clearly shown by the impossible attitude in which the body is bestowed: it is fairly evident that he was entirely at a loss to finish off the part of the body shown above the spine.

The head of the lioness in No. 277 is much more calf-like than that of 254, but the boss is very similar in its design.

No. 280 is a crouching lion whose body is almost lost in the exuberance of the foliage surrounding him and the mane and tail with which he is garnished. The lion in No. 283 is almost a *tour de force* of conventionalism running riot. The head is encircled with a series of lumps to represent the mane; the



No. 283.



No. 281.

backbone is a series of humps, whilst the tail flows in spirals and ringlets over a considerable portion of the boss.

No. 281 is a woman's face framed in a large wimple and

surmounted with large, knobbed foliage; the features are coarse, though not particularly irregular; it is difficult to appreciate them, as the paint in the centre has flaked off, leaving the dark wood underneath, and this effectually prevents any study of the features or expression.

If there is any symbolic intention in these two sets the key to it is probably in the position occupied by the animal subjects. Though so many details are exaggerated until the natural semblance is entirely overlaid, it seems most likely,

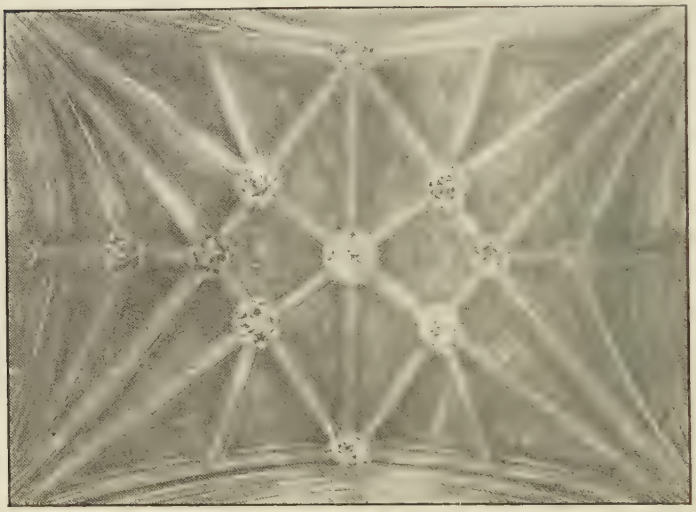


Fig. 7.

as we said before, that lions and lionesses were intended. Watchfulness is one of the recognized significances of the lion in church architecture; with this meaning they are frequently to be found placed at doorways, either without or within, to denote spiritual vigilance. This significance would be quite in keeping with the import attached to the north and south windows of transepts in the middle ages (cf. the 'Bishop's Eye' and the 'Dean's Eye' at Lincoln) and at Exeter the massive towers that guard the Cathedral on either side emphasize the same fancy.

It will not be out of place to end this chapter with a brief notice of the numerous small bosses of the choir screen

which are not included in the numbers of our key plan. It belongs to the period with which we are still dealing, for the whole screen was one of the items added under Stapeldon to the enrichment of the Cathedral. It is divided into two bays in depth and three in width, but only the three western bays and the central eastern bay have lierne vaults; in each of these nine whole bosses and four half-bosses are employed. The accompanying photograph (Fig. 7) of one entire bay—the east central—will serve to illustrate the scheme and style of all. The foliage is of the prevailing early fourteenth century type, but carved with much delicacy; the stem work and the deep undercutting are particularly noticeable. In the west central bay are two insignificant little heads, but they are not of sufficient interest to be worth reproduction.

Freeman quotes (see his Note 61) a payment in the *Fabric Rolls* of 1323-4, 'In cap. talliand. pro voutura clausurae 8s.' He translates this 'for carving five heads for the vaulting of the cloister,' and explains that 'cloister' is the term applied more than once in the *Fabric Rolls* to that part of the screen. As, however, there are not five heads in the vault, it seems more likely that the entry refers to the capitals of the shafts that carry the vaulting ribs, which are enriched with a delicate little border-wreath of carving.

It is also interesting to learn from the *Rolls* that the builder and carver of this screen was William Cannon, of Corfe (see p. 11), to whom the Dean and Chapter 'ex curialitate' awarded an extra payment of £4 in recognition of the excellence of his workmanship. As the entry of this gift occurs in 1319 and the screen was not finished until 1324, it is not quite certain that Cannon was responsible for the bosses of the vaulting, but it is highly probable that he completed the whole structure, as he was still at work in the nave of the Cathedral several years later under Grandisson.

CHAPTER VI.

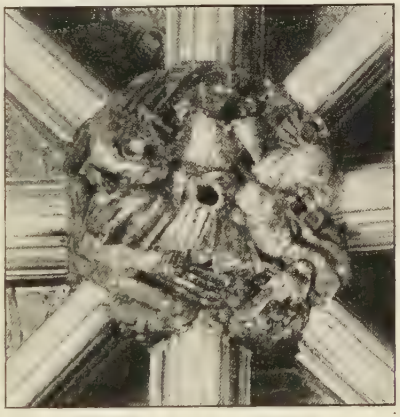
The Bosses of the Crossing, the First Bay of the Nave and its Corresponding Aisle Bays.

The Crossing is divided into three bays; all, of course, of the same height in accordance with the plan of the continuous roof from east to west. The central bay is the largest in the Cathedral, containing an additional tierceron rib on either side of the central boss, but the flanking bays on the north and south are only the same width as the aisle bays. All three together contain twenty-six bosses and ten half-bosses.

They exhibit several characteristics which are also found in the carvings of the first bay of the nave and its corresponding aisle bays. We have grouped them together in this chapter for this reason and because these same characteristics also differentiate them sharply from the work of the remaining nave bays. The style of carving is similar throughout the group, and very inferior ability both in design and workmanship is displayed. This lack of quality in the sculpture is another of the many indications that this portion of the Cathedral has a date and history of its own. Into this question we do not enter more fully for, as we have already had occasion to point out (see p. 32), the date at which the vaulting was completed does not necessarily correspond with the date of construction or reconstruction. It is, however, within our province to note that such indications of date as the style affords suggest that it is nearly contemporary with the work of the western bays of the choir, but by another and an inferior hand. There are several subjects which require individual consideration with which we will deal, commencing with the large bay of the Crossing.

The central boss of this bay (No. 174) depicts a warrior on horseback. He is wearing a complete suit of chain-mail with a surcoat, a form of armour which became obsolete

about the middle of the fourteenth century. Stiffly conventional plumes adorn his helmet, and his features are completely concealed by its clumsy visor. The shield, which was discarded as soon as plate-armour became general, forms part of his equipment, and in his right hand he is brandishing a heavy sword which has lost the point of its blade. The horse is encumbered with plate-armour headpiece and conventional plumes similar to its rider's; heavy trappings protect its body, which is very awkwardly poised. Both horse and rider are beset with dragons; one is biting at the horse's forelegs, another is stretching over the hind-quarters of the horse to attack the rider's back, whilst a third crouches viciously underneath. The number of these dragons precludes the popular explanation that this is a representation of S. George and the Dragon. More probably it is a specially emphatic symbol of the Christian warrior who, having 'put on the whole armour of God,' is fighting successfully against the powers of evil.

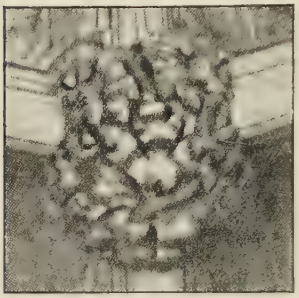


No. 174.

Placed in the centre of the Crossing, at the threshold of the chancel and practically in the centre of the whole Cathedral, such a subject has a particularly appropriate position. It is the triumph of the fully-armed Christian, protected by the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith, girt with the sword of the spirit and mounted on a horse—the emblem of courage—over the three great foes of righteousness, the world, the flesh and the devil. They may beset him on every side but they cannot pierce his armour; finally 'beating down Satan under his feet,' he will win through victoriously.

The stone of this boss is very worn and mottled in parts. Its subject is often invisible, for there is scarcely any direct

light upon it; the whole of the central bay is darkened by the absence of any clerestory windows near it; the windows of the towers on either side are filled with deeply-coloured glass and are too distant to shed more than the feeblest light on this part of the vaulting.



No. 182.

The rest of the bosses in this bay, with one exception, are merely foliage subjects of a most uninteresting and conventional type; the stone is much discoloured throughout and in bad condition; the designs are all unimaginative variants of the undulatory and lumpy foliage already illustrated in the western bays of the choir high vault. It seems, therefore, superfluous to illustrate them further here than by the one example given (No. 182), which suffices to show their similarity to the western choir foliage.

The one exception is No. 176. It is easily distinguished, for the material as well as the design is exceptional—a very bright, whitish stone in fairly good preservation.* The carving also is crisper than in the surrounding bosses.

No. 176.

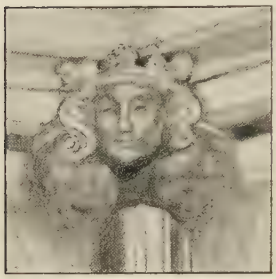
The subject is another version of the combat between good and evil. A beast of complex characteristics is standing over and biting at a dragon. Only the head, neck and wings of the dragon are visible, but they are quite

* At the time of the 1875 restoration a few of the bosses were treated experimentally with a preparation that removed the accumulations of dirt and colour-wash which partly obliterated them. But it was found to remove also all the ancient colour and gilding, and was thereupon discontinued. It is possible that this boss was one of those upon which the experiment was made.

distinctive. His venemous expression of baffled malignity shows that he is having the worse of the struggle as he bites at his enemy's haunch and writhes in the grip of his powerful talons. This victorious enemy is that wholly mythological creature, the griffin. It has been frequently described in both ancient and mediaeval records. So far back as Ctesias, the Greek historian and physician, who died about 400 B.C., we find it mentioned; Sir John Maundeville (d. 1372) gives a spirited account of it; and it is mentioned as late as Glanvil (1680) as a fact of natural history. From the accounts furnished of its appearance we gather that it combined the head of an eagle with the tail and hindquarters of a lion; these peculiarities are very clearly portrayed in this specimen. Its claws were a special and unique feature of its own, remarkable for their size and strength, as they are here represented. Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Vulgar Errors* (III, 2), states that the griffin was emblematic of watchfulness, courage, perseverance and rapidity of execution. These qualities applied to the destruction of evil, as symbolized here by the dragon, would be most essential and appropriate to the Christian warrior; there is thus an evident connection of subject between this subsidiary boss and the central one we have just been considering.

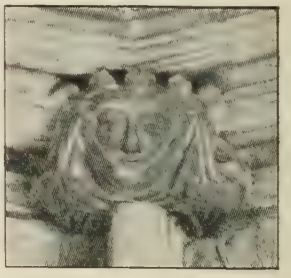
It should be observed that the 'griffin rampant' familiar to heraldry is, of course, an exaggerated convention of the original description of the beast, just as the heraldic 'lion rampant' outdoes his natural congener in most characteristics. Like so many other symbols, the griffin had also an unfavourable signification, and Mr. Evans, in his able work so often referred to, dwells upon this to the exclusion of the more complimentary interpretations. We would therefore point out, in support of our version, that the griffin is used in a complimentary sense by Dante (1265-1321) to represent the Pope (*Il Purgatorio*, c. xxix, I, 105, and c. xxxi, I, 119) in his description of the triumph of the Church. In Dante's poem the car, symbolic of the Church, is drawn by a griffin, and we are told that in this occupation the complex creature signifies the two-fold nature of the Pope's office, for he resembles the eagle in his spiritual character, and in his temporal authority the lion (see also Didron's *Christian Iconography*, Bohn's Edition, Vol. I, pp. 317, 457-8.)

One of the half-bosses in this central crossing bay (No. 180a) is a well carved man's head, crowned, and wearing his hair in full, flowing curls, but with a shaven face. There is nothing distinctive in dress or features by which he can be identified. Edward II, the reigning monarch, wore a curled beard; luxuriant beards were also the fashion in the time of his successor, Edward III. Edward I is represented on his seal as close shaven, but even if a portrait of him should be found in the work of the latter years of Edward II's reign, it is probable that he would be bearded, as in the representation in the presbytery high vault (No. 62.) Another objection to this identification is that the long side curls do not correspond with his way of wearing his hair as shown on his seal.



No. 180a.

The half-boss, No. 272a, on the other side of the arch dividing the central bay from the south bay of the crossing, is a woman's head dressed in a wimple and also wearing a crown. The type of face is so very similar to that of No. 180a that they might be taken for brother and sister. This similarity suggests that they are not portraits but merely typical crowned heads. At this date crowns are restricted to kings and queens; the first prince who is represented in his effigy as wearing a coronet is John of Eltham, brother of Edward III, who died, aged 19, in 1334. Prior to this date princes and nobles wore a gold fillet; an example of this is shown on boss No. 258 in the north tower.



No. 272a.

Another half-boss of this crossing bay worth illustrating is No. 273a. It is a coarse and ugly foliate mask, roughly carved but vigorously designed. Its distinctive feature is

that the foliage, instead of sprouting from the mouth, as it has generally been found hitherto, starts with its stems outside the lip, forming a sort of burlesque moustache. The only previous example of this was in No. 136 (see p. 86), one of the oil-painted bosses in the south choir aisle. This fact strengthens our theory that the work of these crossing bays is nearly contemporary with that of the western bays of the choir, though by a different carver.

No. 273a.

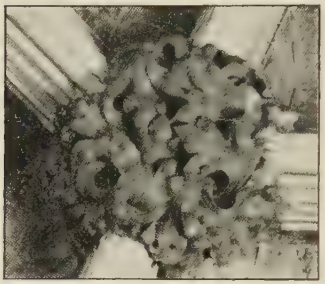
On the other side of the southern arch, against which No. 273a is placed, and really facing into the south transept, is another of these foliate masks, No. 279a, of even greater hideousness. Here the stems of the foliage supply the place of the face lines on either side of the nose—a further and more meaningless departure from the original motive. The mask ends with a huge upper-lip and teeth to correspond; the lower jaw and chin are entirely wanting. These were possibly cut away from the original carving, as the junction here is with the wooden ribs of the south tower vaulting, which are made to fit close up to the stonework of the arch.

No. 279a.

A very conspicuous feature in our photograph is the cord which suspends the electrolier from the roof; it may be as well here to draw attention to this intrusion in several of our illustrations where they cut across a portion of the plate, as in Nos. 22, 78, 89, 112, 180, 216, etc. It has been impossible to avoid including them in these instances, but we have endeavoured to view the bosses from a position in which the cord does not actually interfere with the subject itself.

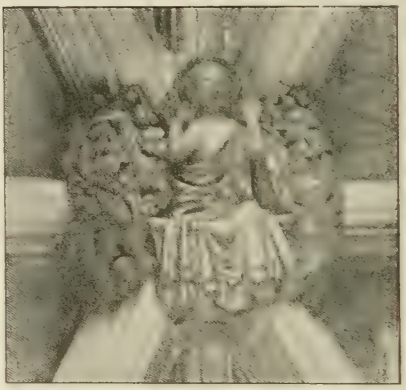
The half-bosses at the eastern and western extremities

of this bay are also small heads, but as they are in very bad condition, of no special interest as subjects and but roughly carved, they are not included in the illustrations. All the whole bosses of this bay (*i.e.*, No. 269-275) are of foliage designs of the type already amply illustrated which prevailed at this period. No. 272 is a good example of perhaps the highest level reached in this portion of the vault carvings, and it will be seen that in style it has a close affinity with some of those of the western choir vault and the vaults of the transept chapels. This style is also often repeated with more or less of development in the later bays of the nave vault.



No. 272.

The northern bay of the crossing is more ambitious in its subjects. The central boss, No. 264, represents Christ seated in Majesty amidst much conventional foliage. He has a nimbus round his head and *both* hands raised in the act of benediction. Probably this unusual duplication has no symbolic significance, but is merely another example of the tendency to an exaggerated use of accepted symbolic conventionalisms commented on above.

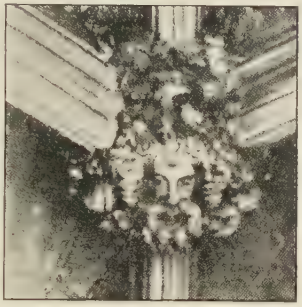


No. 264.

Two large heads also occur in this bay. No. 263 is that of a man with a profusion of hair which falls on either side of his face in heavy ringlets only equalled by the fulness of his beard and moustaches.

The other head, No. 268, is also remarkably hirsute, the pendant ringlets of his beard being of far greater length

than his whole face, though his brow is unusually high and much wrinkled. Meaningless exaggeration is the chief characteristic of these heads and much detracts from their interest. It is true that the hair was worn full and curled by the fashionables of the day, but in no contemporary portraits or illustrations is there anything to be found approaching to the masses of hair shown in these bosses. We cannot suggest any identifications for them. It is doubtful if the carver of such exaggerated types was capable of anything like portraiture; if he indeed attempted it, it is evident that his subjects were caricatured rather than depicted.



No. 263.

The other four bosses of the bay and all the half-bosses are of foliage designs and are not worth individual attention.

On leaving the crossing and entering the first* bay of the nave we find much that is of interest, though we are still amongst the bosses of the same uninspired period. As in the central crossing bay, we have again the symbolic element, and even where the execution is rude there are evidences of thought and intention in the carving.

No. 268.

The first boss, No. 183, at the junction of the transverse rib with the main ridge rib, exhibits the same exaggerated style in the treatment of the hair and other details that we have just commented on in the north crossing bay. The carving, also, is very coarse. The subject is a man's head and shoulders with disproportionately small arms and

*Contrary to the usual method of reckoning, the nave bays are counted from east to west in our numbering to agree with their chronological order.

hands clasped across the chest. He wears a crown which is enormously enlarged in order to accommodate the extraordinary cushion of hair covering his head. If this is at all a truthful representation of the fashions of the day and not a mere conceit of the carver from whose hand these hirsute bosses came, wig-makers, hatters and coronet-providers must have had a busy and profitable time of it just then. It may, however, be a rather daring caricature of the reigning monarch, Edward II, whose foppishness has been recorded by more than one ancient chronicler, and whose predilections for unworthy favourites are alleged to have included his barber among others.

No. 183.

With this predominance of hairy features it is rather a curious coincidence that the central boss of this bay, No. 185, has Samson for its subject. As in the choir, he is shown in the act of rending the lion's jaws. With such a subject and with such practice in hair-carving, it is not surprising to find Samson's renowned locks assuming such luxuriance that at first it is most puzzling to discover his profile amidst the wealth of waving hair. Doubtless here, as in the former appearance of this biblical hero (see pp. 60, 61), he stands as a type

No. 185.

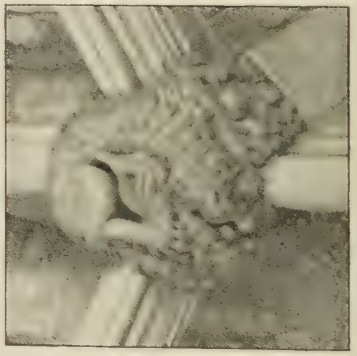
of the Saviour conquering evil by His spiritual power. But though the meaning is the same, what a terrible falling-off in the rendering of it! Both design and execution are positively archaic in rudeness. All appropriate action is absent, and the figure of Samson more resembles the grotesque chalkings of school-children on the walls they pass than any serious attempt at an artistic portrayal of this inspiring subject. His head is huge in proportion to his body, his attitude is lifeless and rigid, and his nondescript garment falls from his neck to his feet in straight and clumsy folds, only opening a little in front to admit of one leg timidly issuing from it. He appears to be bestriding the lion, who takes his painful fate with the same undemonstrative rigidity. His head, it is true, is forced slightly aside by Samson's iron grasp, but otherwise he shows no signs of wincing or remonstrance and carefully keeps his heavily-tufted tail in the meekest position between his legs. Truly, not only must a most inferior hand have been entrusted with this boss, but the artistic ideal must have fallen to a very low level at this time for such an execrable piece of work to have been tolerated in so prominent a place in this beautiful vault. The presbytery carvers would have considered such handiwork as fit only for the rubbish heap. It is an example of the depths to which art may fall through excessive conventionality and exaggeration. The increasing growth of these co-operating elements seems to have gradually destroyed the artistic instincts that had been so vigorous in the men who produced the best presbytery carvings, so that at this period there appears no power left to tell a story or express an idea in stone with any but the rudest methods of suggestion. Before we reach the end of this series of bosses we shall find that a marked improvement sets in once more, and, in figure sculpture especially, some fifteen or twenty years show a really high level again attained.

One curious detail must not be left unnoticed in this boss. Behind the main actors in the scene appear the ominous head, neck and outspread wings of a huge dragon, reaching over from behind the boss and stretching forward with jaws agape ready to seize Samson, while one vast wing covers the hind quarters of the lion. This must surely stand for the devil himself, interfering in the combat and adding his

special support to the evils against which the spiritual strength of the hero is being exerted. In this quaint idea we see perhaps a genuine spark of the old mediaeval imagination at work; it certainly enhances the interest of the design. Mr. Cotton depicts this third figure in the boss as the head of an ass, and comments upon it as such; but that this is quite erroneous our illustration clearly shows.

No. 184.

Surrounding this central boss are four animal subjects, all very closely connected in idea and style. Three of them, Nos. 184, 189 and 192, are undoubtedly lions, and the fourth, No. 188, though a complex animal, has also a lion's body, tail and legs. As symbols the lions here are probably intended to set forth more than one point of doctrine. Thus, in No. 184 we have the lion howling over and breathing on his whelp: this was a favourite symbol of the Resurrection, drawn from the quaint mediaeval tradition recorded in *Physiologus*, that the lioness brings forth the whelps dead, but after three days the lion comes and howls over them and by his breath brings them to life.



No. 192.

In Nos. 189 and 192 the lions are evidently employed as types of spiritual vigilance, in accordance with another of the characteristics of this beast set forth in *Physiologus*, namely, that he always sleeps with his eyes open. From this alleged peculiarity the analogy was drawn that 'so Our Lord slept with His Body on the Cross but

awoke at the right hand of the Father' (cf. EVANS, *Animal Symbolism*, p. 81).

In the fourth beast, No. 188, which is only partly leonine in character, it may be that we have merely the fancy of the sculptor who, having already become familiar with the portrayal of composite animals which displayed definite symbolic characteristics (such as the dragon and the griffin), here united, unintelligently, characteristics that do not appear to carry out any definite symbolic idea. But it is quite possible that a symbolical meaning underlies the forms combined in this curious beast. It has the face of an ape, the ears of a bat or vampire, and the feathered neck of a large bird, all the rest of his body being of correct leonine character. As the lion in the central boss stands for the great 'adversary, the devil,' who, 'as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (I Pet. v. 8), it seems very probable that in this boss also the beast is intended to represent a combination of as many evil attributes as the designer could bring into the composition. The ape has always an evil meaning in mediaeval art, the vampire and the bat are invariably associated with deeds of darkness and rapacity, whilst the feathered neck may suggest the raven, whose significance, as we showed at p. 35, is also sinister, so that the lion-like body of the devil only completes the catalogue of vices here set forth, to be

No. 189.

No. 188.

conquered by the spiritual power of Christ, typified first by Samson, secondly by the Resurrection lion, and thirdly by the vigilant sleeping lion.

The exaggeration of the tuft or lash at the end of the tail shown in all the lions and demi-lions in the portion of the vault with which this chapter deals, and also in the wooden bosses of the towers illustrated in the last chapter, doubtless arose from the desire to emphasize another traditional characteristic of the lion which had been pressed at a far earlier date into the service of symbolism. *Physiologus* informs us that the lion, 'when he perceives that the hunters are pursuing him, erases his footprints with his tail, so that he cannot be traced to his lair,' and draws a far-fetched analogy between this supposed trait and the fact that 'Our Saviour, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, concealed all traces of His Godhead' when He came to dwell upon the earth in human form. Such a pregnant and suggestive characteristic as this sweeping tail obtained special accentuation in consequence, and in the hands of the conventional carver of this period became an abnormally exaggerated feature.

No. 190.

The only other boss of interest in the high vault of this bay is No. 190 on the southern cross-rib. The subject is a woman's head and shoulders with the arms and hands turned up backwards as if supporting the ribs of the vault. She wears a wimple falling in graceful folds over her hair, which is modestly parted on either side of her brow. Her face has a pleasant and natural expression, and altogether this boss, with its entire absence of exaggeration, gives one a sense of relief and surprise appearing among the numerous less agreeable specimens found in the same bay. Its exceptional character is not easily accounted for.

The remaining bosses, Nos. 186, 187 and 191, are merely foliage subjects of the familiar, uninteresting type, and not

in any way deserving of close attention. The only feature requiring notice, which is common to them all, is that they are not circular. This is more or less the case with all the foliage bosses of the crossing which, as we have said, are of the same date. The shape adopted *follows* the angles of the intersecting ribs instead of masking them. In two or three bosses of S. John the Baptist's Chapel we observed this novelty in shape (see p. 115), and it was evidently introduced at this period, for it is characteristic of some of the bosses in the western bays of the choir high vault (*e.g.*, Nos. 86, 88, 94, 98, 99, 102, 104, 109 and 114), though not so definitely developed. It never occurs in the bosses of the earlier vaults, nor is there much trace of it in the later bays of the nave, where circular and slightly oblong outlines predominate.

No. 286.

The aisle bays throughout the nave, as may be observed on the key-plan, have no longer the simple quadripartite vault employed in the choir aisles, but follow the scheme of the high vault, and have tierceron ribs added to the diagonal, transverse and ridge ribs. This arrangement gives them five whole and four half-bosses each.

In this first bay of the nave they exhibit much the same crudity of carving noticeable in the high vault. They are all very flat in section, projecting but slightly below the level of the ribs. Their subjects are varied and interesting, and they are well worth inspection.

In the north aisle the central subject is the 'Incoronata,' or Coronation of the Virgin (No. 286.) It is gracefully designed, though the Saviour's attitude, with bowed head, is not so appropriate as in the earlier example (No. 47).

All the chief characteristic details of the scene are given here (see pp. 39-42), including the star on the Virgin's right shoulder and the globe on which the Saviour's feet rest; the book which He holds in His hand is much broken. If it was originally coloured, as seems probable, so little trace of the colours remains that it is impossible to say what they were. Foliage, conventionally accepted at this period as the vine, surrounds the figures.

To the east of this is a representation of the crucifixion of S. Andrew (No. 285). This must be the boss which Mr. Cotton erroneously describes as 'Our Saviour blessing little children.' The legs of the saint are already bound by large ropes to the lower arms of the cross saltire, which was the reputed instrument of his death, and the two executioners are shown in the act of straining at the ropes by which they are securing his arms to the upper limbs of the cross. There seems to be a cross-beam behind his knees, on the ends of which the men are each resting one raised foot to give them a better purchase whilst tightening the ropes. The martyr wears a robe full to his knees, drawn in round the waist, and his legs and feet are bare. There are no nails shown in the hands or feet.

No. 285.

A very similar representation of this scene is shown on the obverse side of the seal of Rochester (*c.* 1300), where the Cathedral is dedicated to S. Andrew, but there is more detail in it. The martyr has a nimbus, and his robe is embroidered on the hem, collar and belt; he is even larger in proportion to the executioners than in this boss. The men's attitudes in the Rochester seal are founded on the same idea, but there is more vigour and action in them; one leg of each is raised high, but the foot, instead of being placed on a beam or stone, is planted against the martyr's

leg; the heads are thrown well back and the rope-hauling is evidently being done with the utmost energy.

Our other figure subject here, No. 289, is west of the central boss, and is not so easy to identify. A man stands between two large birds whose heads are turned over their backs towards him, and they appear to be bringing him something in their beaks. The man wears a robe draped in thick folds across from his left shoulder, but his feet are bare. He is bearded and on his head the hair grows thickly; there is no tonsure. In his right hand he carries a sword with the point over his shoulder, and in his left hand he supports some small object, the nature of which is not discernible. All the carving is very rough and blunt.

No. 289.

It is recorded of S. Paul, the proto-hermit, that he and S. Anthony were fed by ravens, and one of his recognized emblems is a raven with a loaf in its beak. But the sword, either as an emblem of martyrdom or as symbolic of preaching power, has no place in his history, and therefore we cannot apportion this boss to his memory. We are only able to offer a conjecture as to its interpretation. The prophet Elijah was a favourite subject for symbolical representation; he was fed by ravens and also distinguished himself by slaying with the sword the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon, a deed referred to several times as greatly to his glory and honour. It is possible that this figure may be intended for him; as he was identified by Our Lord with the Fore-runner, this position, next to the scene of the Saviour sharing His glory with His earthly parent, would not be inappropriate for his appearance, for the two scenes would represent the beginning and the end of Christ's ministry.

Another conjecture is suggested by the fact that in Christian iconography bare feet are distinctive of the Three Persons of the Trinity (generally), or of God in Unity, of

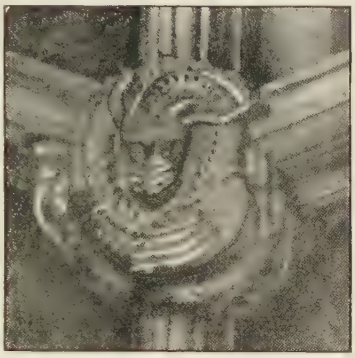
the holy Angels, S. John the Baptist and the Apostles (see Didron, *Christian Iconography*, Bohn's Edition, Vol. I, p. 322, Vol. II, p. 31). This principle may not have been strictly observed in all periods and countries, but we have no reason for assuming that it was disregarded here: the Saviour on the adjacent boss, No. 286, is represented in accordance with the rule. If it was observed, the suggestions about S. Paul the Hermit and the prophet Elijah, which we have just discussed, become inadmissible. By a process of exclusion we may also 'rule out' the Divine Persons, for no emblems of Divinity are present, and as there is no suggestion of anything angelic, we are restricted to S. John the Baptist or an Apostle. As a representation it would be appropriate only to S. Paul or S. John the Baptist.

If it is intended for S. John the Baptist, the object in his left hand is the mutilated remains of the 'Agnus Dei' (see No. 166, illustrated on p. 115) and the sword, though not usually given to him, is the symbol of his martyrdom. In this case the birds *may* be intended as a reference to Elijah as his prototype.

If, on the other hand, it is intended for S. Paul, the object in his left hand is his usual emblem of a book, symbolic of his doctrinal achievements, whilst the sword is, of course, his peculiar emblem as well as the symbol of his martyrdom (see No. 143, illustrated on p. 101). The two bird-attendants present a difficulty in this case. Can it be possible that their introduction was due to a confusion in the carver's mind between S. Paul the Apostle and S. Paul the Hermit?

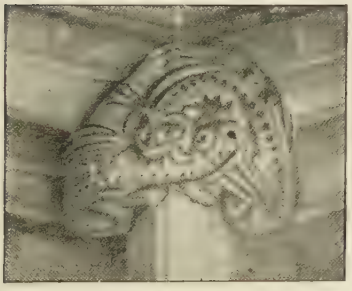
So far as the central figure is concerned, the balance of evidence is distinctly in favour of S. Paul. On either hypothesis we have but a lame explanation to offer of the birds. Walcott, in his *Sacred Archaeology* (p. 255), states that in the catacombs birds are sometimes employed to represent the Passion and Incarnation of Our Lord, bearing in their beaks appropriate legends from the Scriptures; the references to these Mr. Walcott has obviously misquoted. Though it is hardly probable that a symbolism long before fallen into disuse is here revived, it may be that they bear labels, and not loaves, in their beaks. As accessories in this sense they would be equally appropriate to S. Paul or S. John the Baptist.

These somewhat confusing conjectures are the best we have to offer, and we can only hope that some reader more skilled in interpretation may be able to suggest the real explanation.



No. 287.

On the north of the central boss is No. 287, a very clear specimen of the familiar coiled dragon, impersonation of restrained evil. It is noteworthy that this subject is never again introduced into the decoration of the Cathedral vaults, although it found a place in the original cloister vaulting. Probably the decrease in the fear of the devil as time went on caused his symbolic presentments to be discarded; and it accords with the difference in date between this first bay of the nave and all the more western bays that this subject should be found here and be absent further west.



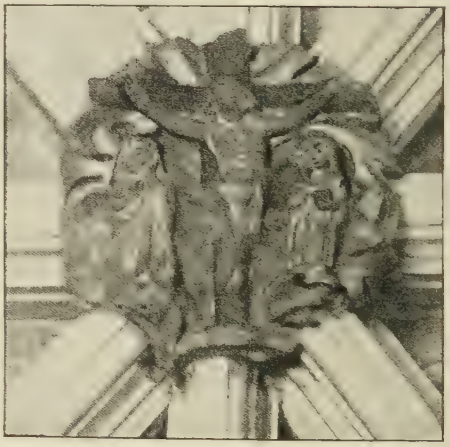
No. 285a.

The half-boss, No. 285a, at the easternmost extremity of this bay, has two repulsive monsters coiled together for its subject, but they are not quite after the usual dragon pattern. It is somewhat difficult to decide whether it is actually intended for two serpentine forms or for one of that type described in mediaeval natural history as having a head at each end of its snake-like body and known as the amphisbaena. There is, of course, a genus of harmless lizard known to modern naturalists by this name in which it is difficult to distinguish the head from the tail. Perhaps some 'travellers' tales' of this reptile are responsible for its exaggeration and for its reported ability to progress either way whence the name is derived.

No. 288 is an ordinary foliage design, and the half-boss next it, No. 288a, is a repellent foliate mask in which, as in the bosses of this type in the south crossing bay, the foliage no longer springs from the mouth. Here the nose itself is the main stem, while branches form the eyebrows above and spring from the nostrils below.

No. 288a.

The corresponding bay in the south aisle has for its central boss, No. 321, the third representation in this Cathedral of the Crucifixion. It is very deeply and coarsely coloured, chiefly in a dull red and gold; and judging from the unimpaired state of the colouring, it must either have been recoloured at some comparatively recent date, or it was originally painted in oils in the same way as Nos. 135-137 in the south choir aisle (see pp. 84-5). For the general exposition of this subject we would refer the reader to pp. 49-51. The traditional positions and attitudes of the figures are duly observed here. The carving of the boss is very coarse and rough, with no trace of the delicacy that inspired the hand of the presbytery artist in dealing with this subject; in fact, the style is consistent with the inferior work of most of the bosses in this bay.



No. 321.

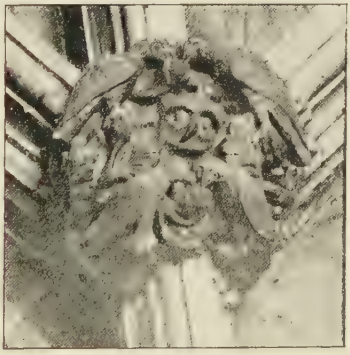
East, north and south of the Crucifixion are three bosses representing male masks. Although not intended for grotesques, they are very unpleasing, lacking beauty and re-

No. 320.

No. 322.

finement and devoid of originality and reality. A tri-radiate nimbus distinguishes No. 320, and thus indicates that it is intended for one of the Persons of the Trinity; but for this emphatic symbol, the common, coarse face would certainly never have prompted such an interpretation. As it is to the east

No. 323.



No. 324.

of the Crucifixion, it is probably intended for God the Father.

No. 322 wears a peculiar cap, twisted round something in the fashion of a turban and having a family resemblance

to the headgear worn by the hirsute men on the Lady Chapel bosses (see pp. 23-4). His *vis-à-vis*, No. 323, is only remarkable for the extraordinary position of his mighty ears. Determined, apparently, that his skill in carving ears should not be overlooked, and aware that they might easily be lost sight of amidst the many curling locks on head and face, the carver has placed them well to the front, almost on the cheeks themselves.

'Turkeys feeding on apples,' Mr. Cotton's extraordinary description of the subject of the last boss in this bay (No. 324), is hardly corroborated by the camera's reproduction of it. Birds feeding there undoubtedly are, one pair above and one below; but they have no resemblance at all to turkeys; the conspicuously-feathered legs which one of the birds exhibits is a characteristic most unlike that species. The fruit they are engaged upon seems even more unlike apples, growing as it does at the ends of little stems turned upwards. Between the two pairs of birds is a hideous mask of a skull-like character (the paint with which it is bedizened makes it appear more bird-like in character in our photograph than it really is). Possibly the birds are ravens who, having feasted on the flesh of this head, are now enjoying a 'sweets' course as a finish to their meal (see p. 35). It is difficult to imagine what moral or religious doctrine could underlie such a design, and one is inclined to relegate it to the category of grotesques whose origin lay in the somewhat untutored fancy of the carvers of the period. This, however, is hardly a safe conclusion when we consider under what unedifying guises even sacred subjects were sometimes presented. We must, therefore, leave its interpretation an open question.

CHAPTER VII.

The Bosses of the Six Western Bays of the Nave and of the Corresponding Aisle Bays.

With this chapter we enter upon the latest period in the vaulting of the Cathedral, that in which the six western bays of the nave high-vault with their adjoining aisles and chapels were completed. This work was accomplished during the years 1327-51, that is to say, during the greater part of the episcopate of Bishop John Grandisson, the last of the great builder-bishops, to whose energy and initiative is due the completion of Quivil's plans by the transformation of the whole fabric of these bays. It is doubtless to this work that Leland alludes in his *Itinerary* (Vol. III., p. 52) when he says of Grandisson 'this Joannes voltid the body of the Chirch.'

As there is good reason for concluding that the transformed nave was dedicated about the year 1351 (see Freeman's *Exeter Cathedral*, pp. 85, 86), we may fairly suppose that the vaulting was completed about 1346-7. This means that the actual carving and preparation of the bosses in the workshop would be in hand a few years earlier. Now the latest year in which the Fabric Rolls record any considerable importation of stone is 1341 (see Freeman, p. 82); from this we may conclude that somewhere about this time the preparatory work of the vaulting was begun. It would be almost the last structural stone work of any magnitude if we except, as falling altogether outside these dates and calculations, the great work of the western screen. There is another item recorded in Grandisson's *Register* (Vol. II., fol. 210) which helps approximately to determine the date of the vaulting. It is the bishop's order to his bailiff at Chudleigh to furnish oaks for the great timbers of the nave roofing, which is dated 1338. This roofing, of course, would have to be practically completed before the vaulting was begun. We may, then,

place the carving of these bosses somewhere in the years 1341-6.

If our hypothesis advanced in Chapter VI. is correct, and the easternmost bay with its corresponding aisle-bays was finished under Stapeldon, the carving of its bosses cannot have been later than 1324-5. It is quite possible that the short time, one year and three months, during which Bishop Berkeley was the occupant of the see, between Stapeldon and Grandisson, witnessed the completion of this part of the vault. This would only affect the dates by a year or so, and in any case there is an interval of some fifteen to twenty years between the two periods of carving represented by the earlier and later bosses of the nave vaultings.

The changes that have already been observed in other portions of the vaulting lead us to expect that after an interval such as this some decided development in the style of architectural decoration will appear. Development there is undoubtedly, but it does not exhibit any features that constitute a new departure, though certain points of distinction stand out with special salience.

Before describing these it must be observed that, in comparing the work done during Grandisson's episcopate with that which has been surveyed in the last chapter, we have to deal not merely with a difference of date: due allowance must evidently be made for the great difference between a first-class carver of his day and one on an altogether inferior level, for the craftsman responsible for the carvings of the nave vaulting of Stapeldon's time was merely of the copyist class. There is no record in the Fabric Rolls to show who is responsible for the later bosses in the nave bays. William Cannon, the 'Corfe marbler,' is still engaged upon the great piers, the triforium, and the cloister columns; but his concern is in general with the portions of the building for which Purbeck marble is employed. Mention is made of payment in the year 1342 to one 'S. Clifford' for carving heads, apparently in the cloister (see FREEMAN, *Exeter Cathedral*, Appendix, Note 76; from the Fabric Roll, 1342-3). Very possibly he was the man who was executing similar work for the nave. At any rate, it is quite evident that the carving of these bosses was entrusted to a skilled

workman, and whatever defects are to be observed are due rather to the influences and art standards of the day than to any lack of ability in the carver.

Keeping in mind this essential distinction, we may return to the consideration of those points which exhibit the developments that took place in the interval between the execution of the bosses for the crossing and easternmost bays and those for the six western bays.

The most noticeable point is the gradual increase of vitality and imagination in the treatment of figure subjects. As the work progresses westwards these become more and more varied and vigorous until in the sixth bay we arrive at a group of figure-subject bosses of quite exceptional interest.

In the foliage designs, still by far the most numerous class, the same types are predominant as in the period immediately preceding, but with more variety of motive and freedom of execution. As we move westward we trace ever less of reference to nature in them; and the tendency to use the conventional leaves as mere forms for pattern-making becomes ever more pronounced. This movement, which ends in the workman contenting himself with producing a mere 'decorated surface' effect, is abundantly exemplified in the aisle-bays. Where this idea predominates the carving has very slight relief, but in those bosses that still aim at representing a living, growing plant good relief and deep undercutting are to be found even at the end of the series. An examination of the foliage designs of this series of bosses will convince the student of architectural ornament that the transition to the stereotyped, conventional forms of the so-called Perpendicular period was actually in progress during their execution. We therefore find here—as in all transitional work—the characteristic features of two periods appearing side by side and influencing one another. In this case the earlier features predominate, although the influence of the on-coming characteristics is very clearly discernible.

It is noteworthy that the increase of the human interest in the decorative work of this period coincides with the decrease of nature study. The artist's imagination is vigorous and creative when occupied with figure subjects and incidents of human interest, although, of course, a

certain amount of conventionalism is still manifest. On the other hand, in the treatment of the foliage designs certain types continually recur and are reproduced with almost machine-like similarity. Even where the workmanship is undeniably good—as it is in most of this nave work—the excellence of a good machine is its most marked quality. In this respect a lively contrast is afforded by those products of the close and happy partnership of active brain and skilful hand which distinguish the work of the presbytery period.

Another point worthy of remark is the comparative rarity of any lively symbolism in the subjects chosen. In all the six bays belonging to this period we only meet with this element in seven or eight designs. And in the execution of these designs the vigour of presentment is very clearly dependent upon the living interest of the subject; the force with which the symbolism appealed to the craftsman is faithfully reflected in the amount of realism infused into its portrayal. This will be demonstrated more clearly by the consideration of individual examples.

No. 193.

In the detailed survey of these bays these general considerations will probably enable the reader to pick out the salient characteristics and realize their import more readily than would have been possible if their data had been scattered over the examination of the various designs.

The second bay, to follow the order already decided upon (see footnote, p. 131), begins at No. 193. This is an agreeable portrait of a king, showing head and shoulders, with hands upraised as though supporting the ribs of the vault—an attitude of which we have already had several examples. His face is shaven, but he wears his hair in the full, curly bunches on either side of the face that were fashionable at the time. Its luxuriance in the presentment is kept within natural limits, and there is none of the grotesque exaggeration met with in the bosses of the earlier part of the nave vaulting.

The reigning monarch at the date to which we have assigned these carvings was Edward III, and it seems highly probable that this boss, the first on the central rib that was put in place during his reign, is intended for a portrait of him. He is usually represented as wearing a beard, but the absence of hair on his face is doubtless due to the fact that the representation was carved in the earlier years of his reign, for he was a mere lad when he ascended the throne. As we have already had occasion to point out, little in the way of actual likeness is to be expected in these carvings. Even in effigies up to this time we have merely types of kings, queens, and other great personages, with any characteristic costume that distinguished them (see above, p. 74). There is a good deal of life and character in the king's face on this boss, although we may not regard the features as specially distinctive of Edward III.

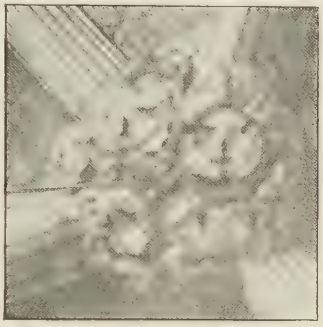
No. 195.

The central boss of the bay (No. 195) is a rather unusual representation of Christ in Majesty. Our Lord is shown seated cross-legged on a throne of an early type with very low arms on which His hands are resting. He wears a crown, but has no nimbus; His flowing hair and beard are thick and curly; He wears a close-fitting tunic and one unsandalled foot is displayed below it. On either side of Our Lord is an angelic attendant waving over His head a *flabellum*, or *muscarium*; the wings of these angels are not very obvious in the illustration, and from the floor of the Cathedral may easily be confused with the foliage of the boss, but from the clerestory their character is at once discernible. Their feet are bare, in accordance with the

usual convention (see p. 139). They are discharging a duty which, in the ceremonial of the Church, devolved upon deacons during the celebration of Holy Communion; two deacons stood, one on either side of the altar, waving a large feather fan over the celebrant and also over the altar to protect the sacred elements from flies and other insects. Because of this duty a *flabellum*, or sometimes a peacock's feather, is used as a symbol of the diaconate (compare symbolic representations of S. Philip the Deacon). The custom, of course, arose in the East, where such attendants are still a frequent mark of royal dignity, and though less necessary for protective purposes, was largely adopted in Western rituals. Great feather fans were carried beside popes in mediaeval processions and, indeed, on the occasion of the great Easter papal procession the custom is still preserved 'as a memorial of ancient usage' (WALCOTT, *Sacred Archaeology*, p. 278). Its use during the celebration of Holy Communion was discontinued in England in the fourteenth century; here it is evidently retained as a symbol of royal dignity. The presence of ministering angels is not common in representations of the glorified Christ; perhaps a reference is intended to the passage, Matt. xxv, 31, where Our Lord prophesies concerning His Second Advent as King and Judge 'in His glory and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory.'

The details are somewhat obscured by the paint, which only too often affords a surface for reflection and diffusion of light, to the despair of the photographer; this fact and the ease with which the angels' wings escape notice from the floor may be partly responsible for a curious mistake into which Mr. Boggis has fallen. It has, at the same time, the merit of considerable ingenuity, so that one might almost wish it were not contradicted by the iconography. Mr. Boggis writes: 'The keystone . . . is a twin boss to the Becket boss, and represents the penance undergone by Henry II for his share in the murder of Becket. The king is seated, stripped to his waist though still wearing his crown, and is being flagellated by two attendants, who stand one at either side of him.' This interpretation was evidently inspired by the Becket boss and perhaps by the chance resemblance between the arrangement of the figures here

and on a boss in Norwich Cathedral, where Christ is shown crowned with thorns and with two attendant figures with ropes or rods. It is the kind of fallacy into which one may be all too easily betrayed if the conventions indicated by such details as the bare feet are overlooked. At the same time, any observer who takes the trouble to make the tour of the clerestory on a bright summer-day can see with ease the nature and details of most of the bosses; Mr. Cotton's mis-descriptions, made, he says, from the vantage-ground of the restoration scaffoldings, are quite inexplicable. Perhaps the most useful moral of Mr. Boggis's mistake is its warning against a too ready acceptance of custom; had he begun with the builders at the eastern end of the nave instead of following the usual routine from west to east, the temptation to this error would have been avoided.



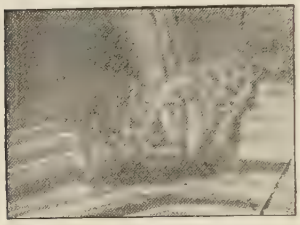
No. 201.

No. 199.

On the cross ridge-rib of this bay the designs are chiefly of foliage. Very conventional forms are there, as witness our illustration of No. 201, but some are almost naturalistic as in the oak-leaf design of No. 197, which is otherwise common-place enough and similar to many already illustrated. In all the relief and workmanship are quite good, though lacking in inspiration.

The only whole boss on this ridge that is not purely of foliage is No. 199. Here a shield, charged with the arms of Bishop Grandisson, is displayed encompassed by three large undulatory leaves.

The arms—Paly of six argent and azure, a Bend gules charged with a mitre between two eaglets displayed or—are very distinct, thanks, probably, to the restoration; and the presence of the shield in this bay is an indication of the point at which Grandisson's work begins. This is the first example with which we have met in our survey of the vault of the decorative use of armorial bearings. Afterwards, of course, they became common enough, but their comparatively late employment in the ornamentation of Exeter Cathedral is curious, for their use was introduced into Europe by the Crusaders at the very time when ecclesiastical architecture was emerging from the Norman and acquiring the Gothic type.



No. 196a.

The half-bosses at the north and south extremities of the cross ridge, Nos. 196a and 201a, are men's heads. They have shaven faces and flowing hair, and are of a rather coarse type, roughly carved. It does not seem as if they were intentionally grotesque in design.

No. 202, the last boss of this bay on the longitudinal ridge-rib, is the fourth representation in the Cathedral vaulting of the Crucifixion scene. The boss is highly coloured, but the figures are in good relief and compare very favourably with the presentment of this subject on No. 321 in the first bay of the south aisle of the nave, though they lack the noteworthy grace of attitude of the presbytery example (No. 57). The head of the Christ hangs painfully to one side; His feet and hands are disproportionately large; the crown of thorns is invisible, and the drapery is reduced to a mere loin-cloth. The Virgin, as usual, has her right hand raised to her cheek and her head bowed upon it; this is perhaps the most successful figure

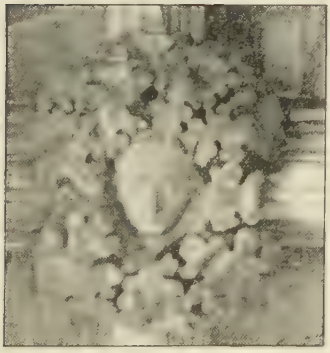
No. 201a.

of the group. S. John is shown looking upwards to the Figure on the Cross: his right hand is pressed to his breast and in his left hand he holds a book, symbolic of his gospel. The conventional vine encircling the figures is well and boldly carved. As in the other presentations of this scene the intention is evidently devotional and mystical.

No. 202.

The bosses of the north and south aisles in this bay have only foliage subjects, and none of them present any fresh characteristics calling for consideration.

In the high vault of the next bay we have an interesting set of heads on the longitudinal ridge-rib. The first of these, No. 203, is a female mask, of unusual beauty and delicacy of carving, quite small in scale and surrounded as by a deep frame with heavy masses of undulatory foliage. It is a refined and pleasing piece of work and has, apparently, no relationship to the grotesque foliate masks of which we have had so many specimens. Yet, doubtless, this mask in foliage is only a development of the foliate mask, although the original actor's mask with its wide aperture for the mouth sprouting foliage is quite forgotten. Its appearance suggests that the craftsman had noticed the specimens of the grotesque mask carved by his predecessors and had resolved to improve upon them by a production excelling them in beauty and delicacy of treatment in entire ignorance of the classic



No. 203.

conceit which first gave rise to this type of design. It is quite interesting to compare the series of masks of this character, commencing with the example in the Lady Chapel, where we have equal prominence given to the mask and to its issuant foliage, going on to the western bays of the choir high vault, where the great coarse mask occupies an undue share of the design and the foliage is reduced to a minimum, and following up the subject with the tiny faces almost buried in foliage found in the transeptal chapels, from which the subject before us is a natural development. Though in many points of craftsmanship it excels its predecessors, judged from the standpoint of symbolic intention it is clearly an example of degeneration.

No. 204.

It is immediately succeeded on the ridge by a woman's face, enveloped in drapery and surmounted by a crown, No. 204. This head and the next, No. 205—for they must obviously be considered as a pair, being distinguished in colour of stone and manner of execution and many small details from their immediate neighbours—are not nearly so delicately carved as the little mask. There is scarcely any modelling in the faces, and the touch of the chisel is rather too obvious. In one respect our photograph is a little unjust

No. 205.

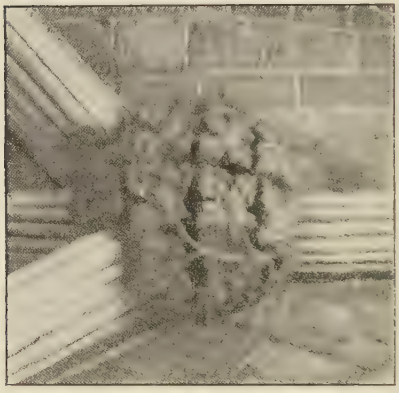
to the female head; the light from the adjacent windows strikes the eyeballs at such an angle as to suggest an unpleasantly furtive expression for which the carver is not responsible. They are usually described as portraits of King Edward III and his wife, Queen Philippa, but a more careful inspection shows that this interpretation is hasty and erroneous.

To examine No. 204 first. It is evidently a female head and it is surmounted by a crown. But it has none of the distinguishing traits of all the best-known representations of Queen Philippa, which are more definite than is often the case with contemporary portrayals of the reigning sovereigns. The 'reticulated' style of dressing the hair, in short curls or puffs at the sides of the face, confined by a net-like covering or by crossed bands, is not shown here, though this is an unfailing characteristic of Queen Philippa's portraits. The effect produced is simply that of a female mask, as in No. 203, fitted not into an encircling wreath of foliage but into a frame of drapery surmounted by a crown. This drapery consists of a simple kerchief worn under the crown and folded across beneath the chin, yet not covering it wimple-wise. It is not a head-dress belonging to the period of these carvings, and must indicate some ideal or special intention.

The so-called King's head on No. 205 is surmounted by a head-dress such as was never worn by any king. Its mitre-like shape is very uncommon, but an almost exact duplicate of it occurs in this Cathedral, and will be seen later in our illustration of the corbel lettered J on the plan. This head-dress is, in fact, the early form of tiara, as assigned to the occupant of the papal chair before the second and third crowns were added to it. The single-crowned tiara was actually being worn by the Pope up to 1298, and this exact form is frequently used in French sculpture and illustrations quite late in the thirteenth century (see Didron's *Christian Iconography*, Bohn's Edition, Vol. II, p. 74). It may well have been perpetuated somewhat later in England, for it is to be found in a fourteenth century fresco by Orcagna (1322-89) in the Campo Santo of Pisa. This is illustrated in Didron, Vol. I, p. 262.

Now, Walcott, in his *Sacred Archaeology*, p. 255, observes that 'The feast of . . . *Cathedra Petri* [is distinguished]

by a figure of the Pope throned and wearing the tiara.' In the light of this fact we can hardly be mistaken in identifying No. 205 as a symbolic representation of the Apostle to whom the Cathedral is dedicated, or rather as a symbol of the dedication of the church itself, for Exeter is '*Cathedra Petri*.' No. 204 is, then, an ideal head of the Blessed Virgin Mary, S. Peter's partner in the original dedication, and in Grandisson's time, if not in our own day, fully recognised as such. Additional support is lent to this explanation by the fact that the foliage so abundantly surrounding the Queen's head is the conventional lily, or *fleur-de-lys*, which does not often occur in the decoration of the church. Indeed, this is the first example with which we have met in our survey of the ornamentation of the vaultings.



No. 208.

Another indication of some special intention lies in the fact that these heads face eastward, whilst other heads on the same ridge face west. In the whole nave vault there are only three other figure subjects so placed, and they are all representations of special import: two separate representations of Christ in Majesty and one of a bishop in the act of benediction. It must not be forgotten that this is the first bay of the nave to be entered by those using the north porch, and that in all probability the great crucifix of the nave was placed here. The minstrels' gallery also emphasizes the unusual importance of the bay, which is altogether a most fitting position for such a representation as we consider these bosses are intended to convey.

Two of the foliage bosses on the cross-ridge of this bay will well illustrate the superior workmanship and designing ability of the period, and are, therefore, reproduced here. No. 208 is a fairly natural and satisfactory treatment of the

vine, and in No. 210, another and more fanciful type of leaf, arranged in a very open and graceful design with good undercutting, is exemplified.

No. 210.

No. 211 is one of the few symbolic subjects found in the later nave vaulting. It represents a centaur wielding a long-shafted spear. The weapon is uplifted in both hands above and behind his head, ready poised for his quarry. He has a fat, sensual face, closely surrounded by hair worn in the fashion sometimes colloquially described as the 'Newgate Ruff.' His expression is but semi-human, and he wears a curious, spiral cap, intended, perhaps, for a Phrygian bonnet; it may be compared with the rider's headgear in No. 58. The centaur was, of course, familiar in the earliest Christian times from the classic myths of Hercules, Theseus and Pirithous, and was very elaborately discussed by the writers of mediaeval bestiaries. It thus came to have definite symbolic associations and meaning. These were not always observed, for Cœur de Lion assumed it as a heraldic badge. Its general significance, however, was adverse, as it symbolized the triumph of animal passions in men; sometimes it personified those sensual appetites against which the Christian warrior must strive. The whole subject, in its classical and mediaeval bearings, is discussed at length in Evans's *Animal Symbolism*, pp. 7, 8, and 317-20.

No. 211.

Two of the thirteenth century misericords in Exeter Cathedral represent respectively a male and female centaur discharging their arrows; for the bow is the usual weapon of these composite creatures. Occasionally, as here, they are found armed with other missiles. In later ecclesiastical sculpture they are sometimes found with heads of priests or monks; this is intended as a somewhat malevolent form of satire on clerical morals.

The half-boss at this southern end of the cross-ridge, No. 211a, is a quaint little demi-figure of a man with raised hands supporting the vaulting. He is wearing an embarrassingly large collar which may be regarded as prophetic of the pillory, or of the ruff which attained such popularity in sixteenth century fashions, according to the taste of the reader. The opposite extremity of this ridge is also finished with a small head, but it is so devoid of significance and in such a worn state that it is not worth reproduction.

No. 211a.

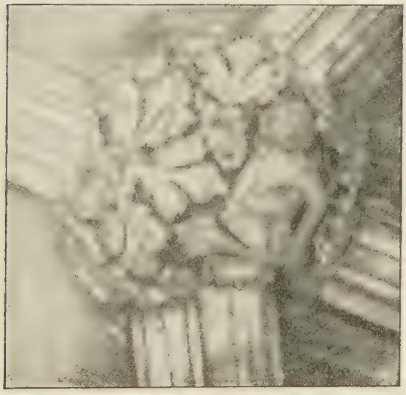
Some subjects of more or less interest are represented in the bosses of the north aisle of this third bay. The north porch opens into this bay, and it would be easy to suppose that this fact accounts for the recrudescence of figure subjects after two aisle bays with only foliage designs. This is not so, however, for three heads occur in the next aisle bay westwards, and it really seems as if there was no pre-determined scheme of arrangement.

The central boss of this third aisle bay, No. 296, is of unusually large size for bosses in such a position, and its carving is very flat in style with only slight relief. The subject is a woman's head, with voluminous head-dress, and disproportionately small shoulders and arms. She is surrounded by large fan-like foliage, the leaves of which are deeply palmatisected and much curled towards their points. The lady's headgear is of the artificially distended type familiar to students of mediaeval fashions—though here extremely exaggerated. She has no crown, nor are there any emblems, sacred or secular, to suggest an

identification. It is, therefore, only possible to assert that she is neither the Virgin Mary nor the reigning Queen; beyond that her identity must be left a matter of conjecture. Her face is long and thin and remarkably expressionless; her puny arms and hands are very ill-modelled, and the carving of the whole boss is inferior and careless.

No. 296.

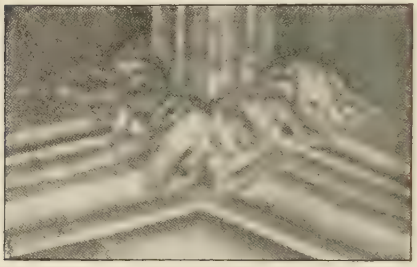
In No. 298 a tiny, unclothed, demi-figure of a woman emerges from one side of a thicket of large, conventional foliage. She appears to be availing herself of the ample covering of one large leaf in lieu of drapery, which suggests Eve in the Garden of Eden; otherwise there is no clue to her identity.



No. 298.

These two distinctively female subjects suggest a topic which students better versed in the history of Exeter Cathedral may perhaps explore or explode. Certain abbey churches had, usually at their western end, porches or chapels to which women were admitted for confessions or for interviews with their relatives in the priesthood. For reasons concerned with other purposes to which these porches or chapels were assigned they were known as "galilees." The

only ones which occur to us at the moment are those attached to the Cathedrals of Lincoln, Ely and Durham. In the first-named the galilee gives access to the south transept, and was at one time the women's entrance. Possibly this north porch was at one time the women's entrance at Exeter. Or—and this is even more hypothetical!—it may be that somewhere here was the western portico of Leofric's Abbey Church, and that the traditions of the past still current in Grandisson's day caused the workman to employ purely feminine subjects for its decoration.* We do not know of any references, historical or otherwise, which give the least support to this theory; it is merely suggested by the fact that there is a distinct departure from the usual character of the decoration of the vaulting of the aisle bays. For the rest, it remains to add that the carving is here even rougher and more careless than in No. 296.



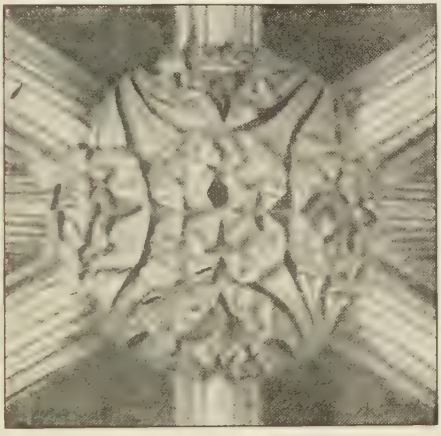
No. 299a.

The other figure-subject in this bay is on the western half-boss, No. 299a, and certainly lends a little colour to our shadowy hypothesis. Two figures, very tiny ones, are lying in a most uncomfortable and perilous position on either side of the central rib. Their heads are close together, but their faces are turned away from each other, and their attitudes are such as preclude the possibility of turning round for the exchange of confidences. Their painful position suggests a punishment inflicted on two persons guilty of too much or too intimate conversation. Both wear hoods somewhat like those of a monk and a nun, though the man's long beard marks him

* Dr. Oliver, in his *Hist. of the Cathedral of Exeter* (p. 216), says, in reference to the north porch—'We suspect that here was the termination of *Warelwast's* Cathedral;' but this is now proved to be an error by the evidence of the masonry and remains of Norman buttresses, etc., found in the restoration of 1870-77, which extend along the nave walls for its entire length.

as no regular monk but either an Austin canon or a friar —orders in which a clean-shaven face was not insisted upon. Perhaps—and here we might take into account the figures on No. 300a, which are described in their proper place—it was intended as a satire upon the abuses to which these opportunities for intercourse with members of the fair sex gave rise.

The large central boss of the fourth bay of the high vault, No. 215, is a very pronounced example of the 'pattern-making' use of foliage, to which we have alluded (see *ante*, p. 147), with its characteristic slightness of relief and absence of anything like undercutting and individuality of form.

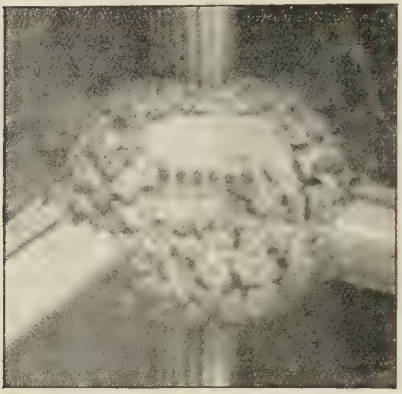


No. 215.

All the rest of the bosses on the longitudinal ridge-rib have foliage designs, undistinguished by any characteristics which make them worthy of separate notice or illustration. On the cross ridge-rib there are a few symbolic figure-subjects, which show that the importance attached to symbolism had not entirely died out, though it had evidently fallen into disuse and is only casually manifested.

No. 216, on the northern cross-ridge, is the second representation of the 'sow and farrow' subject. The suggested explanation of this was given in Chapter IV (see p. 82). The carving here is poor; though there is more relief than in the roughly tooled outlines of the earlier specimen, the delineation is clumsy and lifeless. The animals are surrounded by a quantity of lumpy oak foliage, amongst which the sow has found some acorns to crunch—a touch of naturalism for which one is grateful in a piece of work that is otherwise so apparently 'carved to order.' Both

representations of this subject suggest that the craftsman had no personal interest or delight in his work. Possibly he was unfamiliar with the symbolism and merely carried out the suggestion of some ecclesiastic well versed in his Virgil. Whilst the primary purpose of symbolism was to express in concrete and definite form certain truths for the enlightenment of the vulgar, there was naturally an esoteric application of its possibilities, and some of its messages were only intended to appeal to the initiated. It is very natural that a craftsman, ignorant of the purpose of a design he was required to execute, should fail to impart life and spirit to that which was entirely meaningless to himself.

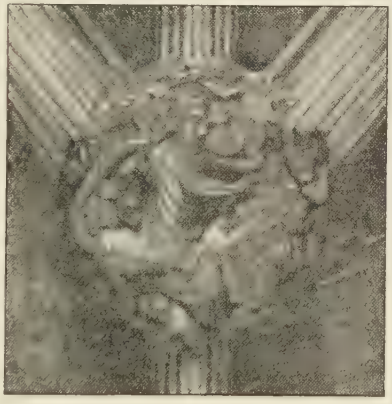


No. 216.

No. 218, on the same cross-ridge, is an interesting rendering of the pelican vulning herself to feed her young. This is the only instance of the appearance of this favourite Christian symbol in the vault of the Cathedral. As is well known, its symbolic use arose from the monkish tradition about this bird's habit of drawing blood from its breast in an ecstasy of self-sacrificing love for its offspring. The story as elaborated in the bestiaries is perhaps not so familiar. There we learn that the graceless young birds develop a thankless and rebellious spirit and smite their parents in the face; this

No. 218.

so provokes the father-bird that he retaliates by killing them with blows from his beak. Remorse for this act speedily sets in, and with his mate he mourns over the dead chicks for three days. The female bird, in her agony of grief, then wounds her breast with her beak, and her blood, flowing over the dead nestlings, restores them to life. These fabled facts, obviously elaborated in the light of orthodox theology, originated in the observation of a crimson blotch which is characteristic of the pelican's beak. After being thus gravely stated as natural occurrences, the historian ingenuously reverses his processes and takes them as typical of Our Lord's love for His Church and of the Atoning Sacrifice. Hence the frequent appearance of the pelican in church sculpture.



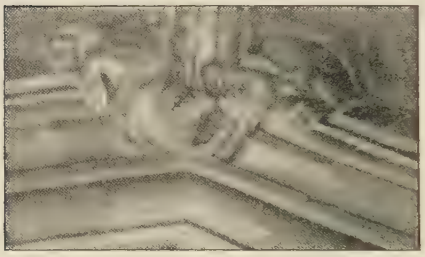
No. 219.

On this boss the mother-bird stands on the edge of the nest with wings raised and spread above her back, and is in the act of plunging her beak into her breast. The bird is evidently portrayed by one altogether ignorant of the special characteristics of the species, and is more like a hawk than a pelican. The heads of three fledglings, evidently already revived, emerge from the nest and are eagerly stretched up towards her. The workmanship is so superior to that exhibited in the delineation of the 'sow and farrow' that the natural inference is that in the one case the beauty of the truth symbolized inspired the artist, whilst in the other the meaning did not appeal to him or was, perhaps, unknown.

Corresponding to this 'pelican' boss there is on the southern cross-ridge a third representation of the combat between Samson and the lion, No. 219. Whilst the conception and craftsmanship is very inferior to the representation of the scene on the boss No. 57 in the presbytery vault (see p. 60), it is far more vigorous and interesting than that

in the first bay of the nave, No. 185 (see p. 132). Here in the fourth nave bay, as in the last mentioned example, Samson is bestriding the lion and wrenching his jaws apart, but the animal is by no means passive in the hero's hands, his tail is angrily lashing the air and his body contorted in the effort to escape. As the acknowledged type of Christ's victory over sin by His spiritual power, this subject is very appropriately placed to pair with the 'pelican' symbol —the whole sacrifice of Love and the full might of Holiness being together perfectly exhibited in Our Lord, of Whom these two scenes are equally symbolic.

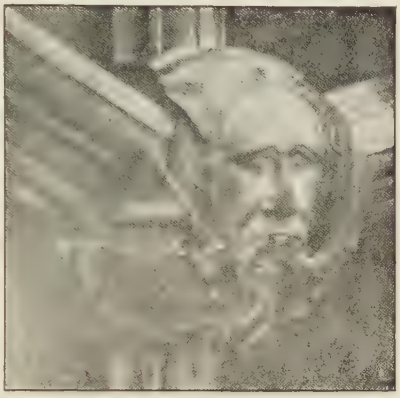
In view of the tendency exhibited in some quarters to resolve all symbolism into adaptations of classical mythology, it is perhaps as well to remind ourselves that the eternal combat between good and evil, of which we have had so many symbolic presentments in the vaulting under the guise of David and Goliath, or of Samson and the Lion, or of the Warrior and the Dragon, is really far older than the Perseus myth. It has been found in Scandinavian folk-lore and in the time-worn sculptures of Persepolis and Nineveh. Indeed, all lands have their local traditions which embody man's consciousness of this ceaseless warfare, whose reality is fundamental alike to the histories of Krishna and of Christ.



No. 300a.

In the north aisle bosses of this fourth bay are three heads and also a small half-boss, No. 300a, presenting two particularly loathsome dragon forms whose open mouths are furnished with a fearsome array of pointed teeth. They are placed very similarly to the 'friar and nun' figures (No. 299a) on the other side of the same transverse arch, except that one dragon's head is turned right round in a manner quite anatomically impossible, and that they, therefore, have their faces and not the backs of their heads turned towards each other. Their proximity to the human couple rather suggests

a subject often found in ecclesiastical caricatures—the Devil listening approvingly to the scandalous conversation of two persons, generally a monk and a nun.



No. 302.

Of the three bosses adorned with heads, No. 302 is a foliate mask not distinguished by any specially interesting detail; No. 303 is a man's head, crowned, with curling beard; and the westernmost, No. 304, is a beardless young man, wearing his hair cut straight across his forehead and flowing in those semi-curled side-locks that were in vogue at this time and of which we have already had several examples (compare Nos. 120, 211a, 196a). We have photographed this head from a special point of view to show clearly the large leaf with which the top of his head is covered. In a full face view the points of the leaf showing above his hair and forehead give him almost the appearance of being crowned.

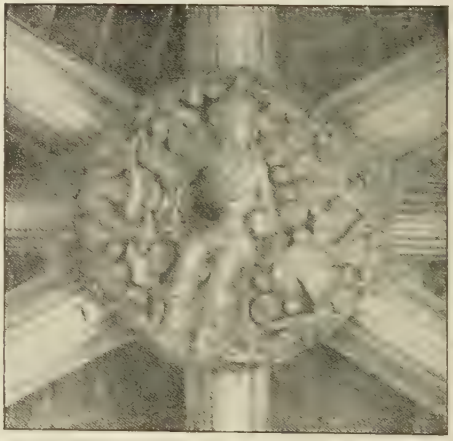
No. 303.

The south aisle bay contains only carving subjects of the prevalent type. About the only point in connection with all these southern aisle-bays worthy of note is that some of them have been cleaned quite white by restoration methods, whilst others still retain the heavy gilding with which they were originally finished. Mr. Cotton makes the somewhat extraordinary statement that at the time of the

restoration the majority of these bosses were too decayed to admit of identification. From this one would naturally conclude that the conventional foliage carving of these bays is quite modern in workmanship since, though uninteresting, it is certainly not in the ruinous condition suggested. We have made most careful enquiries from most trustworthy observers well acquainted with the fabric before and at the time of the restoration and have received the entirely credible testimony that none of the bosses were replaced and that only a few—and those mostly in other parts of the building—were the subject of quite minor repairs.

No. 304.

The interest of the fifth bay is almost limited to the central boss, No. 225, which is a dignified and well-carved representation of Christ seated in Majesty. There is no nimbus; indeed, at this period it seems to be more often omitted than not, as we have already seen in the bosses numbered 158, 202, 286 and 321. The right hand is, as usual, raised in the act of benediction, and the left holds the broken remains of either a book or an orb—it is impossible now to say which. The face and hair are very well modelled, and the drapery falls



No. 225.

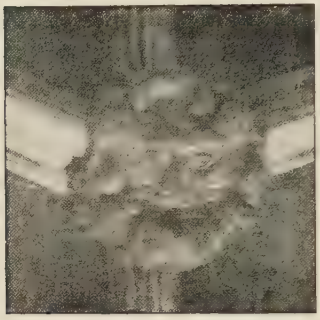
in natural and graceful folds. The form of the figure is much marred by a large hole which has been pierced through the boss at one side of it. The surrounding foliage, though well carved, is extremely unnatural and ugly, and the sculpture of this boss is one of the most poignant examples of the contrast mentioned at page 147, between the increasing naturalism of treatment in portraying the human figure, and the corresponding abandonment of any remnants of naturalistic ideal in the foliage designs.

No. 228.

North and south of this boss are two uncharged heraldic shields, Nos. 228 and 229, surrounded by the flat 'pattern-making' type of foliage. It is quite probable that they were charged originally, as, in another bay we find a blank shield, of which the charge is recorded as recently as Mr. Hewitt's list of bosses (pub. 1863). Dr. Oliver states that the Montacute shield appears in the vault, and as it is not to be found there now, we may reasonably conclude that one of these originally bore the Montacute coat of arms—three lozenges in a fess gules. The appearance of these arms in the vault seems to be accounted for by the fact that Katherine, sister of Bishop Grandisson, married William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury. This lady is famous as the heroine of the story

No. 229

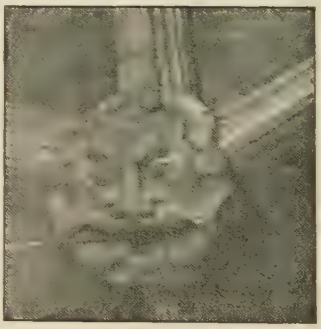
of the founding of the Order of the Garter. Very probably the Earl contributed to his brother-in-law's great work in the Cathedral.



No. 226.

The next pair of bosses north and south, Nos. 226 and 231, are grotesque masks, from each of which now depends an electrolier. No. 226 has more affinity with the familiar foliate-mask than No. 231 has, though doubtless both are mere variants of the original idea. In 226 two lines running parallel across the face at first suggest some new departure in the design, but are probably merely the result of a flaw in the stone and a repair while the boss was being carved. The representations of evil in the Middle Ages gradually changed from repulsive monsters portraying its loathsomeness and horror to more or less mirthful caricatures—a re-incarnation of the elves and hob-goblins of an earlier day. The devil, once dreaded, was now merely laughed at. Perhaps these two grotesques illustrate this changed attitude.

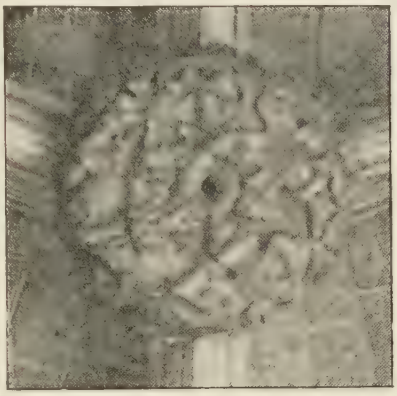
No. 232 is given as a specimen of the rendering of the vine and its fruit in this period of conventionalism. In the work to be seen in many of the details of the Cathedral of later date (*e.g.*, Stafford's screens west of the chapels of SS. Mary Magdalen and Gabriel, 1395-1419) the loss of naturalistic treatment is still greater, and, beside it, this vine-leaf seems to retain a reminiscence of the beautiful nature-studies of an earlier day.



No. 231.

All the aisle bosses of this bay are of foliage designs, showing a good deal of ingenuity of pattern in their arrangement, and but little else worth noting.

The high vault of the sixth bay presents us with several very interesting figure subjects, and nothing new or remarkable in the matter of foliage. First in order of those to be illustrated we come to No. 234, the seated figure of a bishop, with his right hand raised in the act of benediction, and the other clasping the staff of his crozier, the head of which has been broken off. The stems of the coarse foliage surrounding him form a kind of canopied niche into which he fits. From the size of the mitre and the fact that he was the occupant of the See at the time that this part of the nave-vault was being erected, we may fairly conclude that this is intended for a portrait of Bishop John de Grandisson. The face has much character and individuality, and gives one the impression of being a portrait in reality and not merely in name. He probably chose this position for himself, not only as commemorative of his connection with the building, but also as an essential figure in a group of three bosses all belonging to the same subject, of which this is more properly the last. The subject, dramatically portrayed on the central



No. 232.

No. 234.

boss of the bay, No. 235, is the murder of S. Thomas of Canterbury. In many respects it is the most finished and careful work in the whole nave vault, and its execution was evidently a matter of considerable importance, to which much care and thought were devoted. It is an attempt to faithfully present a historic occurrence of comparatively recent date, and, as our notes will show, the subject had been conscientiously studied and carefully composed. It is true that the murdered archbishop was afterwards canonized, but the scene itself is purely a secular historical subject. In this respect it is unique, for, with the exception of commemorative portrait heads, it is the only historical subject outside the scripture narratives and legends of saints employed in the adornment of the vault.

Grandisson had made the history of S. Thomas of Canterbury a special study and wrote his biography; the manuscript of this is preserved in the Bodleian Library, MS. 493. There was also a definite link between Exeter's bishopric and the martyred archbishop; Bartholomew Iscanus, one of Grandisson's predecessors, was one of the two bishops deputed to re-consecrate the desecrated cathedral of Canterbury nearly a year after the murder, and he it was who celebrated the first mass there after the re-consecration. On that occasion he preached a sermon on the text 'For the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul' (Ps. xciv, 19). This same Bishop Bartholomew also, long afterwards, received Tracy's confession concerning the deed (see STANLEY'S *Memorials of Canterbury*). Thus Grandisson's interest in Becket and the intimate connection between Exeter and the murder gave a local importance to the subject, and doubtless these facts combined to cause its representation in the vaulting.

The scene was also very popular for church adornment at one time, though comparatively few examples remain. Probably its inconspicuous and remote position, well out of reach of ordinary implements of destruction, enabled this boss to survive Henry VIII's indignant mandate ordering that 'all images and pictures of the archbishop through the whole realm should be put down and avoided [*i.e.*,

removed] out of all churches, chapells, and other places,' and that his name be expunged from the Calendar of Saints and all breviaries. To this order may be traced the scarcity of representations of the scene; for S. Thomas of Canterbury was a remarkably favourite saint with the English people, and at one time the portrayals of his tragic end were very numerous. Of those that have survived, the earliest known is given in an illuminated Psalter in the British Museum (Harl. MSS., 1502), which is, Dean Stanley says, undoubtedly of the period, and probably next in date to that is a drawing of the scene by Matthew Paris (d. 1259), while a fresco of the subject in Preston Church, near Brighton—built towards the end of Henry III's reign—is attributed to the time of Edward I, on account of the armour shown in it being only mail armour. In this fresco occurs a curious feature not found in later representations of the scene: the Divine Hand is seen issuing from the clouds to receive the departing spirit of the archbishop.* Besides these, there is a painting on a board in Canterbury Cathedral, which is engraved in CARTER'S *Ancient Sculpture and Painting*; and also a mutilated sculpture over the south porch. Another fresco exists in S. John's Church, Winchester, and a mural painting in Dodbrooke Church, near Kingsbridge, Devon, is still visible; and in a window in the church at Brereton, Cheshire, the murderers are all depicted in separate lights, but there is no scene being enacted.

DR. OLIVER, in his *History of Exeter Cathedral*, suggests that 'the spirited representation of the saint's martyrdom introduced in a nodus of the vaulting of our Cathedral we imagine the Bishop [Grandisson] had borrowed from the obverse of the seal of Stephen Langton, the renowned primate of Canterbury.'

The seal of Archbishop Thomas Arundell (c. 1411), reproduced in one of the early volumes of *Archaeologia*, has for its obverse a miniature of the murder of Becket and the scene, whilst differing in some details, is composed very similarly to this representation on the Exeter boss.

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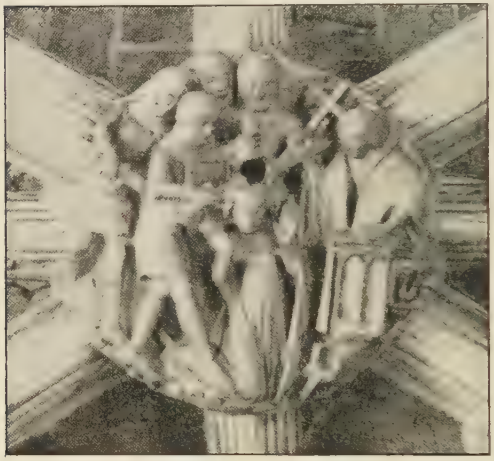
* See *Archaeologia*, Vol. xxiii, p. 319.

Whatever its possible origin, we have in this boss an uncommonly well-preserved specimen of the conventional representations of the scene, and one which well repays a detailed examination. We first notice that, in addition to S. Thomas and the priest on his left hand, there are four figures in armour. In some representations only three are given, but that is probably due to lack of space or some other purely incidental reason. Certainly these four men were actively concerned in the deed of murder according to all the accredited accounts. The murderers are attired in full chain armour with surcoats. The bears with which Fitzurse's surcoat is embroidered in the Canterbury painting are not given here, or perhaps they have vanished with all other traces of colouring. There is but little room for doubt as to the identity of the various assailants. The foremost, holding his short shield in front of him, and aiming a blow at the victim's head, which wounds at the same time the priest's upraised arm, is William Tracy, the '*primus percussor*,' as he is described in one of the most ancient accounts of the scene. The one behind him, on the left, is Reginald Fitzurse, who had already struck at the primate's head, but had only succeeded in knocking off his cap, which may be seen lying on the ground in the right hand corner. The spurs of these two knights are quite clearly visible in the boss. Immediately behind Becket is Hugh de Horsea, or Mauclerc, chaplain to Robert de Broc, holding his sword perpendicularly, which indicates the brutal deed, attributed to him by most writers, of savagely stirring



No. 235.

and scattering the brains from the gaping wound in the smitten head, whilst exclaiming, 'Let us go, let us go; the traitor will rise no more!' Mauclerc is often omitted from the scene, as he only joined the murderers in the Cathedral, and was not one of the original conspirators. This final action of his was, of course, not in reality taking place at the same time as Tracy's first stroke, but it is so given in several representations, in order to compress into one descriptive scene as many points as possible of the prolonged assault. Similarly, in the actual fray, Becket was not on his knees at the moment of Tracy's first stroke, but was struggling desperately for his life, assisted bravely by the priest, Grim; but as it was recorded that later in the affray, on receiving the third blow from Tracy, he sank to his knees with his hands raised in prayer, this more becoming attitude has been adopted by the artist here as more suitable to enhance the sanctity of the martyr's reputation.

The fourth knight, who is seen quite in the background, is probably Brito, or Richard le Breton, to whom the brutal act of stirring the brains is sometimes attributed. He undoubtedly was the assailant who struck the archbishop, after he had fallen wounded on the pavement, so tremendous a blow that he severed the scalp and snapped his own sword. From one point of view in the Cathedral, though not in our illustration, can be plainly seen on the boss a hand, wielding a mighty sword, in the background above the top of the cross that Grim holds; this, doubtless, belongs to the figure in the background and points to its identity with Brito. A fifth knight, Hugh de Morville, is not shown in this boss. He is often omitted, especially where, as here, lack of space is a feature in the grouping. Dean Stanley says it is recorded of him 'that he struck no blow, but contented himself with holding back at the entrance of the transept the crowds who were pouring in through the nave.' The Preston fresco represents him as turning aside with his sword not unsheathed.

The archbishop's meek and resigned aspect was, as we know from contemporary eye-witnesses, only arrived at after a fierce but unavailing struggle with the assailing knights. He was clothed in his 'white rochet with a cloak and hood

thrown over his shoulders'; the 'cloak' has here become a cope fastened with a handsome morse; and the rochet is the under-garment distinguished by its close-fitting sleeves.

The priest, Edward Grim—a Saxon monk from Cambridge, who had only arrived on a visit to the palace a few days before—is erroneously represented here, and in most mediaeval pictures of the murder, as the archbishop's cross-bearer. But the acting cross-bearer, Henry of Auxerre, who, at his command, had preceded Becket in state into the Cathedral, had fled when the attack began. The part that Grim really enacted was that of protector to the primate, and it was in throwing up his arm to defend his superior's head from Tracy's sword-blade that he received the wound which disabled him; not in raising the cross, as represented here. It is only in the earliest pictures—the fresco in Preston Church, for example—that this error is avoided, and Grim is shown without the cross.

Another popular error, illustrated here, is that Becket was murdered 'at the altar of S. Benedict.' The murder is generally represented as taking place before an altar, and, as Dean Stanley remarks, 'the furious altercation is converted into an assault on a meek, unprepared worshipper kneeling before the altar.' In reality, the final blows were struck in the space in front of the corner wall of the Chapel of S. Benedict in the north transept of the Cathedral, and there was no altar nearer than the one within this chapel. Becket had been dragged there by his assailants from a spot further away from the chapel. The tradition that he was kneeling at the altar arose because a wooden altar was subsequently erected on the spot, and for long remained there unchanged, despite the alterations and increased magnificence of the Cathedral. In pictures and sculptures it is this posthumously erected altar that is shown as though standing there at the time of the murder. Such anachronisms are common to mediaeval work, in which, to avoid leaving anything unrecorded, salient points from various periods were compressed into one and the same scene. Then, later, this little wooden altar was confounded with the altar within the Chapel of S. Benedict, and in still later accounts was even transformed into the High Altar. In our illustration it is certainly a small altar that is shown, and some interesting

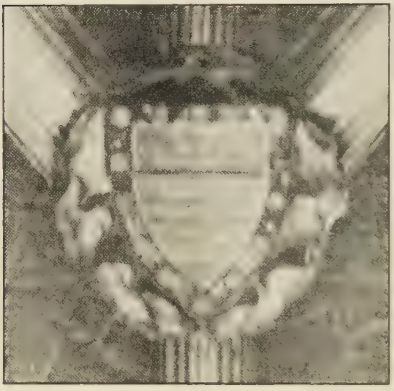
detail is discernible; a little, low credence is seen by the side, or at the back, bearing two vessels, apparently a chalice and ewer; and in front of it the paten lies on another lower shelf.

It is a pity that such a complete and carefully designed representation of the scene, as this is, should be marred by the large central hole drilled through it. The chief failing in the design—into which, as we have seen, so many details are most conscientiously and ingeniously introduced—is the absence of appropriate expression on the faces of the knights. They look amiable and serene; hot indignation and savage revenge might be emotions quite unknown to them. Tracy's aspect in particular is calm and almost courteous as he proceeds to carve, rather than shatter, the archbishop's head. In the faces of the chief victim and the priest their actual feelings are much more definitely portrayed, though they also are 'favoured to be calm' to a marvellous degree; but the resignation of S. Thomas's expression and the pity shown in Grim's gentle countenance are at least appropriate to the occasion. Possibly the artist was more at home in carving the faces of saints, angels and holy men than in depicting fierce, elemental human passions.

No. 242.

Still on the central ridge, and immediately west of the depiction of the murder of S. Thomas of Canterbury, is boss No. 242, which is adorned with a graceful and artistic figure of an ecclesiastic kneeling and holding his harp in front of him or playing on it. This is described by Mr. Hewitt as 'a figure, seemingly a canon, kneeling, with a label'; and that is certainly the impression the casual

observer from below would receive. Closer examination shows that this 'label' or scroll is really the curved frame of a large harp, the back of which is clearly visible resting against the left shoulder of the figure. This undoubtedly marks the 'priest' as S. Dunstan, whose proper emblem is a harp. For some account of this great ecclesiastic and church-builder who flourished about the year 925 the reader may be referred to WHARTON'S *Anglia Sacra* or CHURTON'S *Early English Church*. William of Malmesbury tells us that 'most of all he delighted not only in the practice but in the science of music, and in the making of musical instruments.' Among the many quaint legends gathered round his name by pious biographers is one which tells that once when in the house of a pious matron he hung his harp on the wall whilst busy designing a pattern for some church embroidery on which she was engaged, and as he sang at his work the harp of its own accord poured forth music. Hence the emblem assigned to him.



No. 238.

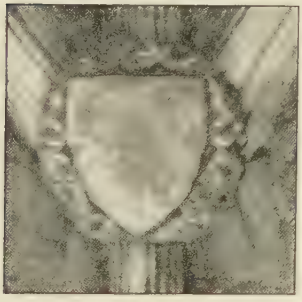
His appearance here, next to the murder of the Primate of Canterbury, is accounted for by his special connection with Canterbury Cathedral. It was he who placed the Monastery of Canterbury under the rule of S. Benedict, and it was, as we have seen, close to the Chapel of S. Benedict that Becket was slain. S. Dunstan's shrine was formerly in the choir of Canterbury Cathedral. Both the face and figure of S. Dunstan, as shown here, are remarkable for their artistic excellence, the expression of the face, particularly, being life-like and appropriate.

This boss completes the group of three with which Grandisson commemorated the history of his favourite saint, Thomas of Canterbury, and his own special veneration for that saint.

The other two bosses of note in this bay are both shields, charged with coats of arms and bordered with foliage. No. 238 bears the arms of Bishop Bitton—Ermine, a fess gules—and its appearance here was a graceful recognition on Grandisson's part of the fact that the great work which he was completing, the vaulting of the Cathedral, was begun by Bishop Bitton, to whose time, as we have seen, the vaults of the easternmost chapels belong.

No. 239.

On No. 239 is the other shield which, though its colours are now much defaced, bears Ermine, a cross engrailed gules. These are the arms of the Northwode family. Grandisson's sister Agnes had married Sir John de Northwode, and it is very likely that he contributed to the expenses of the completion of the Cathedral. Evidently the family interest in the Cathedral was considerable, as we find that one of Sir John de Northwode's sons, another John de Northwode, was collated to the Archdeaconry of Exeter in 1329, but resigned the office.



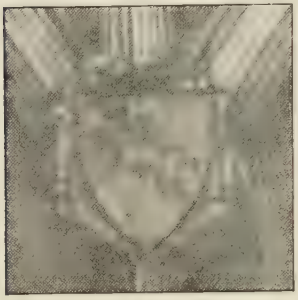
No. 248.

The aisles of this bay, again, present no bosses of any individual character; all are of foliage subjects, and their designs are in general very conventional and conform to the type of the period of which we have given sufficient examples already.

In the seventh, and westernmost, bay even the high vault presents nothing more interesting than a couple of shields to vary the foliage designs.

One of these (No. 248) is now blank, but, according to Dr. Oliver's statement, was formerly charged with the arms of Bishop Berkeley—Gules, a chevron between ten crosses

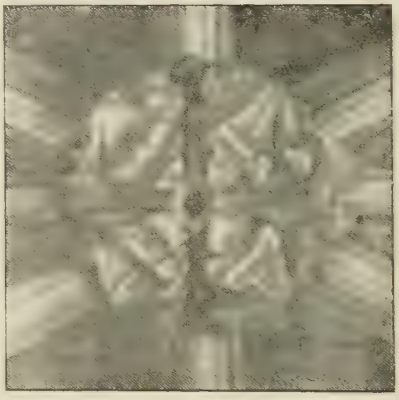
patee, or (but according to Izacke, argent)—whose short occupation of the See (1326-27) immediately preceded that of Grandisson. As we have previously noted (see p. 146), it is possible that some of the work of the vaulting of the crossing bays was executed during his episcopate.



No. 249.

On the corresponding boss (No. 249) the shield is charged with Bishop Stapeldon's arms, Berkeley's predecessor and the bishop certainly responsible for the later part of the choir vaulting, if not also for the very earliest part of the nave. They are Argent, two bends wavy sable.

The centre boss of this bay (No. 245) is a good specimen of the development of rectangular forms in foliage—to which we referred on pp. 91, 92—which obtained such great favour with the carvers of the 'Perpendicular' period of architecture. This rectangularity is *the* feature that dominates all forms of that period—window tracery, surface panelling, etc., as well as the purely decorative designs. 'Rectilinear' rather than 'Perpendicular' would be the appropriate name for the period during which this style predominated; as it more correctly emphasizes the contrast with the 'Curvilinear' and 'Geometric' periods that preceded it.

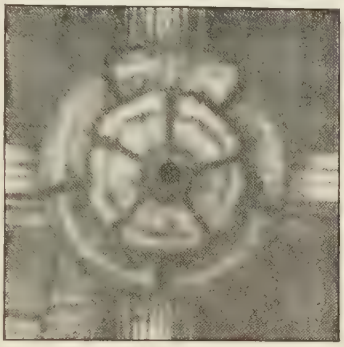


No. 245.

Other bosses in this bay show very markedly a tendency to geometrical arrangement in design. In No. 243, for example, we have the only specimen that occurs in the vault of the definite 'Tudor' rose, to give it the name of a later time when it became the favourite ornament of the

Tudor period in company with the portcullis, the crown, and the shield.

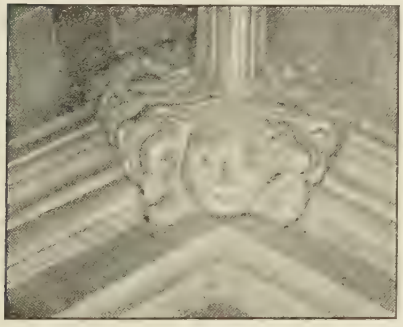
Two insignificant heads form the half bosses at the north and south extremities, Nos. 246a and 251a. Neither of them is worth illustrating.



No. 243.

In the north aisle of this last bay the foliage carving is decidedly above the average, though still quite conventional in design. The bay is finished westward with a large half-boss, No. 319a, of a man's head. He has the curling side-locks of which we have already seen several examples. The design is completed by a large leaf on either side of his face. It is not a good specimen of carving.

Adjoining the westernmost bay of the nave, and opening from its north aisle, is the Chapel of S. Edmund. The vaulting ribs are arranged on a later pattern than is found elsewhere in the Cathedral (see Fig. 8). The chapel itself is as old as the eastern chapels and the north porch, but it was originally separate from the Norman nave. When Grandisson completed the transformation of this end of the church, he joined the chapel to the adjacent aisle, and in so doing made some enlargements and alterations in it that are quite obvious. The vault, therefore, doubtless dates from the time of these alterations, and does not centre north and south with the centre of the north window head and the arch connecting it with the aisle. It is of the lierne type, which was afterwards developed into very elaborate



No. 319a.

designs. The diagonal, transverse, and some of the tierceron ribs in this class of vault do not meet upon a ridge-rib, but are stopped before arriving at a common intersecting point by small connecting ribs, called liernes (from *lier*=to tie, bind); and wherever these liernes thus meet and stop the other ribs a boss is required.

The six bosses in S. Edmund's Chapel are all of foliage; the designs are very much of the 'pattern-making' order

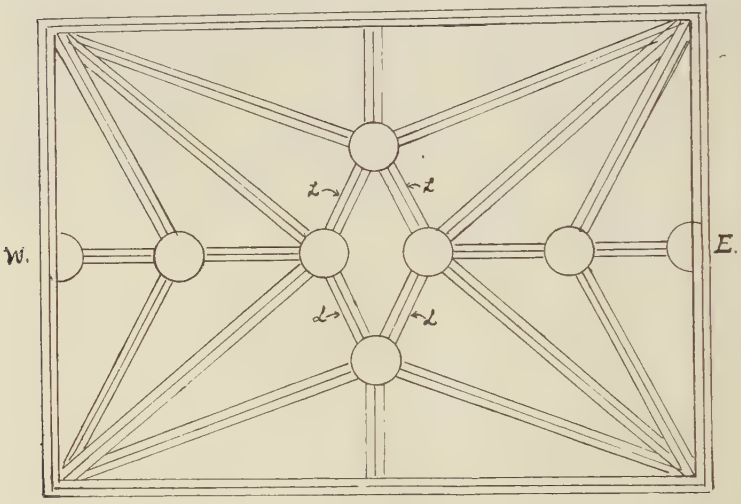


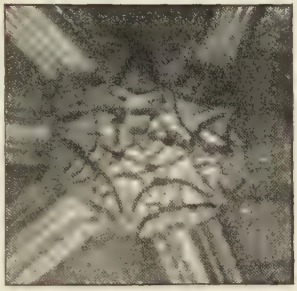
Fig. 8.

Lierne vault of S. Edmund's Chapel.
L.L.—Lierne ribs.

and are executed in extremely shallow relief. The illustration of one, No. 360, is sufficient to show the type, in which it will be observed that geometric angularity reigns supreme.

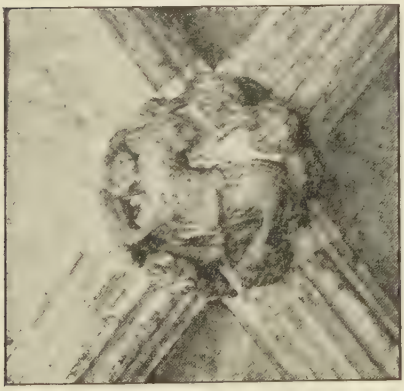
The north porch, leading into the nave of the third bay (*i.e.*, the fourth bay from the west end), has a simple quadripartite vault similar to the vaults of the choir aisles, and therefore contains but one boss, No. 355, which is an interesting carving of an *Agnus Dei*. It has been somewhat damaged, and part of the staff of the bannered cross is missing, but most of it is clear and sharp. The Lamb

has its head turned over its right shoulder, looking backwards and upwards towards the cross. The staff of the cross is supported by its raised right fore-leg. A wreath of ten-petalled roses surrounds it, and the stems thereof issue from the side of the Lamb; emblematic probably of that incorruption distinctive of the nature of Our Saviour, of which the *Agnus Dei* was itself especially symbolic. This emblematic use of the rose was also noted in the first boss illustrated in this series (see p. 13). As a work of art, this boss is evidently of the same date as the earlier carvings of the eastern vaults; but we have illustrated it here because the porch adjoins the nave, although its vault is, of course, a separate piece of work.



No. 360.

Although not one of the bosses proper of the Cathedral, there is one item of roof sculpture which must not be omitted from this series. It fills the centre of the ceiling of the little chapel of S. Radegunde, constructed in the thickness of the west wall of the Cathedral on the southern side of the central western doorway. This chapel Grandisson, as his first piece of work in the Cathedral, caused to be prepared and ornamented as a mortuary chapel for his own remains. Though it has but a small, barrel vault, without any ribs, he extended his enrichment of the interior to the stone ceiling, and had carved thereon a full-length seated figure of Christ in Majesty. This we have marked on our plan as No. 369.



No. 355.

Despite the scars of age and the mutilations of iconoclasts, it is still an impressive and dignified representation of this favourite subject, with which the series of bosses began and with which it fitly ends. This is the fifth example in the vault, and the five exhibit a very considerable diversity of treatment. The nimbus, which was omitted in the two last examples (see Nos. 195 and 225) is here resumed. The left hand is grasping the staff of the Resurrection cross and banner, of which, however, there are only scanty indications discernible. The right arm is broken off, and, as there is a hole and socket left in its place, appears to have been carved and fixed separately. The scars on the masonry behind indicate that it was, as usual, raised in the act of benediction. It is noteworthy that, in this latest vault-sculpture of Our Lord in Majesty, much the same type of expression is given to the countenance as in the earliest representation of the same subject (see p. 13). This severity of mien is purposely to indicate the supremacy of Christ's Divine nature after the Resurrection.

No. 369.

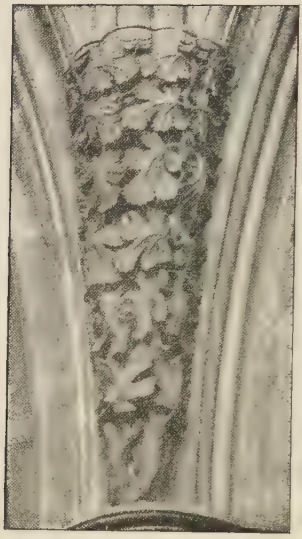
There are seven more small bosses, Nos. 362-368, in the porch of the central west-front doorway, and five in that to the south of it, Nos. 370-374. The porch to the north has a later fan-vault devoid of bosses. But all these small west porch bosses are now in a state that makes them quite unfit for illustration. The partial exposure to the damp of the outside atmosphere has caused them to crumble and discolour, and it is difficult even to discern their subjects. The central one is a fifth representation of the Crucifixion; the heads of all the figures are gone, and but little detail of any kind is left. It is flanked by two that appear to have been portrait heads. The rest of these small bosses are of conventional foliage designs.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Vaulting-Shaft Corbels of the Great Piers.

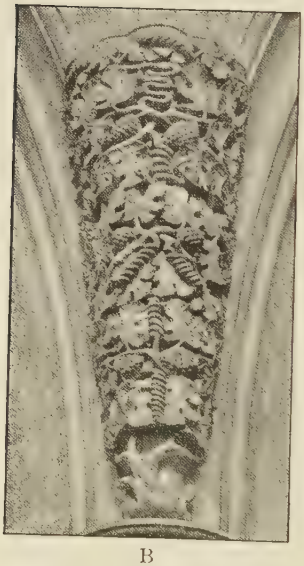
It is unnecessary here to give a detailed exposition of the structural functions of the corbel. Obviously, it is a support of the bracket order, and it projects from the face of a wall or other mass of masonry, into which it is always well bonded, in order to carry the weight of some superstructure. It may bear merely some small and insignificant portion, such as the hood-mold of a tiny surface arch, or it may be responsible for the serious burden of several of the skeleton ribs on which the stability of a whole vault depends (see Ch. I, p. 4). In the present chapter we are concerned with those corbels which perform this latter important function.

The arrangement of vaulting-shafts springing from corbels instead of being carried down to the ground, is found in many English cathedrals and churches; the presbyteries of Lincoln and Chichester, the choirs of Lichfield, Beverley Minster and Boxgrove Priory, the north transept of Hereford, and the naves of Gloucester Cathedral and Tewkesbury Abbey afford examples. It is, in fact, one of the features which is characteristic of English vault-construction as distinguished from the French Gothic. To the eye it certainly suggests a less satisfactory constructive plan; the shaft rising straight from the ground to the spring of the vault conveys an impression of greater strength than the corbel, however large, can suggest. Nor is the eye, generally speaking, wrong in its judgement: the 'logical,' unbroken, vertical support really possesses superior constructive stability. Although we have described the vaulting-shaft corbel as an essentially English characteristic, many examples of the use of the vertical shaft are to be found. It may be seen in some of the finest specimens of our architecture, as in Westminster Abbey, and Winchester, Lichfield and Southwark cathedrals; a beautiful example is also afforded by



A

A′

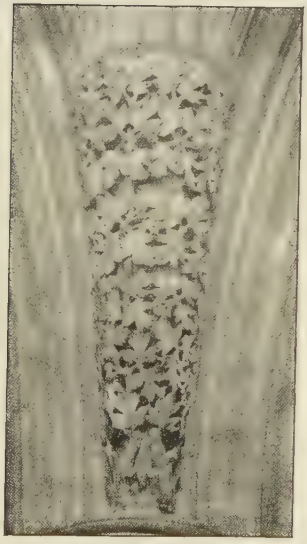


B

B′

C

C′



D

D′

the church of Ottery S. Mary, Devon, which in plan and other respects is largely copied from Exeter Cathedral, though this marked point of difference in its vaulting system exists.

There are plenty of other examples in which the Gothic builders availed themselves of these important structural corbels as appropriate opportunities for elaborate decoration. Of the instances already mentioned, Lincoln presbytery (or 'Angel Choir'), Chichester presbytery, and Hereford north transept illustrate this further development. But nowhere else do we find them presenting such a complete, progressive study in decorative work of consecutive periods, including that of the very acme of naturalistic art, as at Exeter.

This period, poetically described by PROFESSOR W. R. LETHABY in his paper *How Exeter Cathedral was Built* as 'the moment when carving burst into full leaf—the June of architecture—before there was a sign of the crumpling which evidenced approaching decay,' is most perfectly represented in the four presbytery bays of Exeter Cathedral, the eight corbels of which are illustrated on pp. 184-5, lettered according to their order on our plan. On the south side the foliage is: A, Horse Chestnut; B, Vine; C, Thorn; D, Fig; and on the north: A′, Meadow-Buttercup (?); B′, Oak; C′, Tree Ivy; D′, Filbert.

On p. 11 we referred to the possibility that these corbels were the work of William de Montacute, and gave the evidence which goes to prove that they belong to the period 1301-04, and that their carving is contemporary with that of the presbytery bosses or perhaps a little later, for though the corbels were in position long before the bosses, they would be left uncarved until the structure above them was completed, and then carved *in situ*. The bosses, of course, had to be carved in the workshop and afterwards fitted to their several positions where the carver's delicate craftsmanship could not possibly be carried out.

Anyone who carefully examines these eight corbels cannot fail to be impressed by the wonderful beauty and truthfulness of their designs and the masterly skill displayed in their execution. The union of grace and vigour in the forms and arrangement of their foliage; the crispness of the carving,

unspoiled by any vain attempt to reduce stone to the exact similitude of leaf-texture; the play of light and shade secured by the deep undercutting; these combine to produce a standard work of naturalistic art seldom, if ever, surpassed. It is only by repeated contemplation of them, in varying lights at different times of the day, that a full appreciation of their exceptional qualities can be attained, therefore, though the accompanying illustrations are faithful as far as they go, all lovers and students of art should follow up the study of them by a leisurable visit to Exeter choir and realize for themselves the full beauty of these corbels as it is revealed by prolonged contemplation of them under all aspects.

From the Fabric Rolls (quoted by FREEMAN, *Exeter Cathedral*, Note 35) we learn that the payment for the carving of these presbytery vaulting-shaft corbels was 8s. 6d. each; the present value of that sum is not easily determined, but it would be equivalent to something from £6 to £8 10s.

The corbels of the other four bays of the choir, lettered E, F, G, H, on the south, and E′, F′, G′, H′, on the north, are differentiated in several respects from the presbytery corbels. The date of the carving is later (see pp. 88, 89) and the alteration in foliage ideals is shown well established. With this development we have dealt fully in the fourth chapter when considering the bosses of the same portion of the cathedral; we need not, therefore, enter again upon it here. It should be observed that in F the 'coiled wreath' design, so frequently repeated in the bosses (see p. 93), appears adapted to the corbel form.

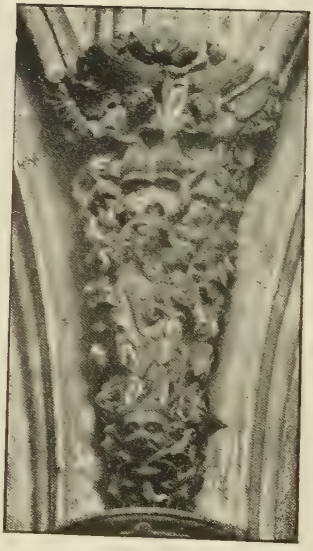
In the corbels of this portion of the cathedral, figure subjects are far more freely introduced than in the bosses corresponding in date.

The first of these figure subjects, F′, is a singularly charming design. It is a standing figure of the Virgin, crowned, and bearing the Holy Child in her arms. Instead of the usual orthodox, unnatural attitude and expression of the latter—with the right hand raised in the act of benediction—the Holy Child is here the most natural and charming baby, looking up at His Mother and roguishly stroking her chin, while she smiles down upon Him with an expression of maternal affection. In His left hand He

E

E′

F



F′

holds what appears to be the orb, the symbol of sovereignty. Part of the Virgin's right arm is broken away. Above them two censing angels are gracefully arranged to fill the broader end of the corbel. The foliage which climbs up the sides and frames the figures is also well designed; it issues from the mouth of a mask which forms the base of the corbel and upon which the Virgin's feet rest. The whole composition is full of charm and beauty.

This subject has only been met with once in the bosses, in the very inferior carving of S. John the Baptist's Chapel, No. 162. As we shall find it more than once repeated in the series of the corbels, a few words about its history will not be out of place. The earliest effigies of the Mother and Child are traceable to Alexandrian and Egyptian influences, and it may be that the time-consecrated myth of Horus and Isis suggested the original type of the '*Sancta Dei Genitrix*.' It certainly came into general use as an orthodox theological symbol about the time of the Nestorian heresy. To this we have referred in an earlier chapter (see p. 40). In strictly devotional representations the Virgin is invariably seated till the end of the thirteenth century, and for the next hundred years the innovation of a standing figure was confined to sculpture. She is usually represented standing on a pedestal (its place is here taken by the mask), with the Child on her left arm and in her right hand, which is missing here, a sceptre or a flower. The crown for the Virgin marks a later date; it defines her, of course, as 'Regina Coeli.' If in place of the sceptre she carries a book it is either to define her as 'Mater Sapientiae' or as a mystical reference to Isaiah xi, 1; xxix, 11, 12. Another common attribute is the ring on the third finger which defines her as the 'Madonna Sposa.' Until the beginning of the fifteenth century the Child is always draped and the Virgin is frequently shown standing on, or encircled by, the branches of the Tree of Life. The angel-attendants emphasize her glory as 'Regina Angelorum,' as has been previously observed (see p. 48).

The idea of placing a mask, or animal, or human head at the base of a corbel is a new feature, first introduced in this later group of choir corbels. From this point it is continued throughout the church with only three exceptions.

G

It occurs first in corbel E′, where the base is a small crouching hound; but in the pair G, G′, foliate masks are again thus employed.

G′ is another figure corbel of great interest. In addition to the mask at the base there are two distinct portions; the upper one contains the Incoronata and the lower a full-length standing figure of a minstrel playing on a viol or rebec. On either side, and between the two portions, oak branches twine, and although they do not equal the oak of corbel B′ in naturalistic beauty, they retain far more of the element of naturalism than the rest of the foliage in these eight later corbels. The oak-leaf is only conventionalized to the extent of having developed a central lump whilst its outer edges are somewhat too blunt and too regularly indented; it may thus be favourably compared with the vine in corbel E, which is scarcely recognizable as such but for its bunches of grapes. As in other places, there are in these second period corbels indications of a master-hand at work in some, and in others evidences of inferior artistic merit and of a less skilled craftsman.

G′

In the upper group of figures the usual attitudes and details proper to the Coronation scene are observed (see pp. 40-42), but there is no nimbus visible round

either head. The glorified Christ holds a book in His left hand and is in the act of placing the crown on the Virgin's head. The type of face assigned to the Virgin is very similar to that in the previous corbel on the same side, where she is carrying the Infant Christ in her arms; both are doubtless the work of the same artist. Slight traces of the original colouring on these figures are still discernible. The minstrel figure below, although no wings are shown, is doubtless one of the heavenly host who usually attend the Virgin in the Coronation scene (see p. 48); this is indicated by the bare feet, a distinction only given in mediaeval art to the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, to angels, apostles, and S. John the Baptist. Wingless angels are by no means unusual in western mediaeval art (see Didron's *Christian Iconography*, Bohn's Edition, Vol. II, 107).

H

The next and last pair of this later set of corbels in the choir also have figures for their main subjects. That on the south, corbel H, represents S. Catherine holding the wheel emblematic of her martyrdom in her left hand and a book in her right; this latter is not an emblem common in the representations of this saint, but probably refers to the learning she displayed when arguing with the fifty philosophers—an important incident in her career, recorded in the *Byzantine Guide to Painting* as proper to her representation (see Didron, *Christian Iconography*, Bohn's Edition, Appendix II). The frequent appearance of S. Catherine in the ornamentation of Exeter Cathedral (see, for example, the east window) is doubtless due to the fact that in mediaeval art she was most popular as an attendant on the Virgin who shared with S. Peter the original dedication of the cathedral.

The size of the face and head in this statuette is unduly

large in proportion to that of the figure. Were it not that this same disproportion appears in nearly all the figures of the same period that follow, it might be thought that the figure had here been purposely shortened and diminished in scale as the work of the carving went on in order to make room for the life-size head which serves as a pedestal to the figure. All the corbels are composed of several courses of masonry, being carved on the projecting face of the outer 'order' of the arches; generally there are three courses included in each corbel, but sometimes as many as five. In this corbel H the joints of the masonry show that one large block of stone was inserted, from about the centre of S. Catherine's skirt to the abacus below. This block, although it ranges with the rest of the stones of the arch 'order,' does not go *through* their whole depth, but is, so to speak, a surface block. This suggests that it was an insertion in the original structure, made after the carving of the corbel had been begun. This block contains, besides the lower portion of S. Catherine's robe, the life-sized head of a man, so vigorous and life-like as to leave scarcely any doubt that it is an actual portrait. The features do not conform to any special type common to the period, and there is marked individuality in the expression. The head-dress is a cap with the lappet turned up in front, such as burghers and master-craftsmen wore in the times of the Plantagenets; a somewhat similar example was shown on the boss numbered 52, reproduced on p. 46.

Now, it was no uncommon thing in mediaeval days for the portrait of a master-craftsman to be included among the carvings for which he was responsible, and there seems every likelihood that this is a case of the kind. We may, therefore, assume that we have here the portrait of either William de Montacute (to whom we have already referred) or that of his successor in the work of the cathedral carvings, whose name is unknown to us. We are told by FREEMAN (*Exeter Cathedral*, p. 59)—though he does not give a reference to his authority—that William de Montacute was executing carvings for the cathedral both in 1302 and 1313. As this last date is very near that to which we may safely assign the carving of these second period corbels, it seems quite possible that a portrait of this gifted carver is here presented

to us in so admirable a style. On the other hand, as we pointed out at p. 89, the very decided change in style between the carving of the presbytery bays points distinctly to a change of carvers. In that case it seems as if we must either deprive William de Montacute of the special glory of being responsible for the lovely presbytery foliage-corbels, or relinquish the idea that it is his portrait which stands as a kind of signature to the second period corbels. Doubtless in the course of ten or twelve years a considerable change in the work of a man himself is by no means an impossibility; but it seems scarcely likely that so decided a change in workmanship, as well as in design, could have taken place in de Montacute's case—especially as the change is to a less degree of manual skill—as to render it probable that he executed both the eight presbytery and the eight western choir corbels. The point that this is an inserted block of stone thus assumes some importance; this makes it quite possible that it is an example of self-portraiture by de Montacute, although its immediate entourage does not suggest his hand. It may have been skilfully worked in in his honour. Or, since successful self-portraiture is not easy, it may be that it is a successful study of him made by one of his pupils which was deemed worthy of permanent preservation. This leaves us free to suppose that the master-craftsman, from whose hand so many of the finest works came, was still in honour among his fellow-workmen and perhaps on the cathedral staff, if not actively engaged in sculpture. Many other lay craftsmen of importance, architects, builders and heads of departments, were, of course, equally entitled to honour; but it is intrinsically more probable that a master in the carvers' shops would be portrayed. Whilst the question of the original of this portrait must be left open, there appears to us considerable probability in favour of the identification we suggest.

The opposite corbel, H′, has for its main subject a bishop with attendant deacons each bearing a flabellum (see p. 150). The figures and faces are in very good preservation, but the proportion of the heads to the bodies is again unnaturally large. Very possibly it is Stapeldon, the then occupant of the see, who is here represented. The shape of the face and head and the thick bunches of curling hair

behind his ears are very like the same details in the recumbent effigy of Stapeldon on his elaborate tomb in the sanctuary. The right hand, as usual, is raised in the act of benediction, and in the left is a crozier with a richly carved crook.

Dr. Husenbeth, in his *Saints and their Emblems*, remarks that when a bishop is represented without any special emblem it may generally be assumed that S. Nicholas is intended to be portrayed, especially in thirteenth century examples. This statement may possess some immediate significance in view of Dr. Oliver's statement, 'on the south side (of the choir-screen) was the Lady's Altar, often called Bratton's; on the north side S. Nicholas's' (*Lives, &c.*, p. 214). It is certainly noteworthy, in view of this tradition, that the corbel on the south depicts S. Catherine, the favourite attendant assigned to the Virgin, and that on the north this bishop with his attendant deacons.

H'

Below the three figures of the corbel is again a life-sized head as a pedestal. It is remarkable how speedily the 'false art,' which supplies some artificial source from which the foliage of the corbels might spring, led to the degeneration and disproportion which these brackets betray; they here compete for attention with the main subject. This head represents a Queen, whose bright, amiable face is framed in a wimple. Very probably it is intended for Isabella, the wicked wife of the reigning monarch, Edward II. Perhaps there is a malicious intention to represent her as under the feet of her most strenuous opponent, Bishop Stapeldon.

Although this interesting pair of corbels completes the choir series, as a matter of chronological accuracy the first and second pairs in the nave, on the western side of the crossing, should be taken with them. Undoubtedly

these four belong to the same scheme and almost the same date.

On the north side J′ is a composition which much resembles its immediate predecessor; the bishop in the attitude of benediction, with his attendant deacons, is here replaced by a central figure standing with outstretched arms, and on either side a stalwart supporter sustaining his upraised arms by placing a hand under his elbow. It is a representation of the scene described in Exod. xvii, 10-12, when, on the occasion of the Israelites' battle with the Amalekites at Rephidim, Moses held up his hands that his followers might prevail and 'Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side.' This scene was a favourite type of redemption in the middle ages, and, as we shall presently have occasion to notice, its position here is evidently intended to emphasize its symbolic significance. This symbolic interpretation is derived directly from the 12th chapter of the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas, where Moses, stretching out his hands in order that Israel might overcome Amalek, is said to signify the power of the Cross. Evans, *Animal Symbolism*, p. 249, notes that a similar interpretation was also given to Isa. lxv, 2—'I have spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people'—interpreted by a mystical christology as a reference to the rejection of the crucified Saviour by the Jews.

J′

In this representation there is much of the grotesque element in the face of Moses, and his figure shows the same disproportionate shortness that was noticeable in the two last corbels. Little foliage is introduced except on the eastern side, where the corbel returns round the angle to meet the adjoining transept pier; on the front and on the

western side the space is well filled with the three figures and their drapery. A life-sized head of a king, now much mutilated, serves as a pedestal to the group. Probably it was a pair to the queen on corbel H′ and represents Edward II, the reigning monarch. There is nothing specially distinctive in the head or face to support this identification; it is, in the main, the typical king's head of the period, but the shaven upper lip and the hair bunched in curls on either side of the face are details seen in the effigy of Edward II in Gloucester Cathedral and usually given to would-be portraits of him.

J

On the south side, facing the Moses corbel, is corbel J, which has for its chief subject a dignified standing figure of the glorified Christ. Despite some damage sustained by the face, the features are sufficiently distinct to show that it is a noble type of countenance. The head is surrounded by the tri-radiate nimbus, and the right hand is raised in the act of benediction. The bannered cross, held in the left hand of the Risen Saviour, is of the accepted type considered symbolically appropriate to resurrection portraits. The carving is decidedly coarse and rough, and the proportions of the figure inaccurate, but it is evident that there is still an ideal of some artistic excellence in the carver's mind.

These last three corbels, H′, J′ and J, have one uniting motive—the presentment of the benediction of the Church for all worshippers; the prefiguring type is set forth in the symbolic virtue of Moses's upraised arms, the Divine actuality in the Risen Lord, Who raises His hand in blessing, and the ecclesiastical authority and delegation in the bishop granting his episcopal benediction.

As in the three preceding corbels, the lower part of J is occupied by a life-sized head, and in this case it has some

special interest. It is a bearded man wearing the peculiar type of head-dress to which we called attention in describing the boss in the nave high-vault numbered 205, and identified as the single-crowned papal tiara which had been but recently superseded by one with two or three crowns (see p. 155). There are, therefore, the same reasons present here for concluding that this is a symbolical representation of S. Peter, who is most appropriately placed beneath the feet of his Risen Lord as the 'rock' upon which the establishment of His church on earth was to rest. It is a brief, symbolic setting forth of the motto which runs in letters of gold around the great dome of S. Peter's at Rome:—'Tu es Petrus; et super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam Meam.'

K

The next corbel on the south side, lettered K on the plan, has a standing figure of the Virgin carrying the Holy Child in her arms. This corbel has been more damaged than any other in the Cathedral, and it is impossible to form any opinion as to what the faces of the figures were like; the Child's head and limbs are entirely gone, and it is only from the attitude of the Mother's left hand and from a few remaining folds of drapery that His position can be determined. The Virgin's face is so mutilated that there is only left a rough indication as to where the features have been, and her right hand and arm are broken off. It is quite possible that this defacement was the intentional handiwork of some iconoclastic fanatic at the time of the Puritan supremacy in England. Few traces of the ravages of time are discoverable on any of the corbels, and the damage inflicted here, directed so specially to the heads of the figures, is of the very kind with which their misguided zeal has made us all too familiar. This Madonna and Child is the largest, if not the most conspicuous, Madonna among the corbels, and this might

account for its having suffered in this way while others have been left undamaged. Everyone who is interested in sculptural detail must have felt more at a loss to explain why some things escaped the iconoclast than to recognize his hand in some work of wanton outrage. On the other hand, we have to note that three other conspicuous corbels in which the Virgin is the chief subject—in two of them the Holy Child is in her arms—are left uninjured; and it would certainly seem strange if the zeal that inspired the destruction of one left the others untouched. To reach any of these corbels for intentional defacement it must have been necessary to procure some special, long implement, for they stand twenty feet above the ground, and destructive work could not be accomplished by random hacking with swords, axes, and such other handy tools as men might be carrying about with them—weapons that would suffice for the mutilation of monuments, chantries, and all the lower sculptures. It seems highly improbable that when some such far-reaching implement had been procured the destroyers only used it on three corbels out of thirty-two, and on one of those only disfigured a King's head which had no specially 'idolatrous' significance. This, coupled with the fact that the pair of corbels, J and J′, also damaged, are those nearest to the ruined Madonna, rather suggests that these defacements—thus limited to quite a small area of the building—were caused by the fall of some piece of masonry or scaffolding at a period subsequent to the carving of this bay, very possibly when the reconstruction of the nave, which started from this point, was resumed in Grandisson's episcopate. In such an accident the heads would suffer most, as they naturally project furthest from the face of the wall.

The Virgin stands on a bracket whose edge is ornamented with a kind of star pattern, and underneath, supporting the bracket on his back, is a gnome-like little figure of a crouching King. This may be intended as a symbolic reference to the supremacy of Christ, which is described in Eph. i, 19-22; among the 'all things' that have been 'put under His feet' special mention is made of 'principality, and power, and might, and dominion.' There are also numerous references in Holy Scripture to Our Lord as 'King of Kings' (see Rev. xvii, 14; xix, 16,

et al.) On the other hand, it may simply be intended to emphasize the glorification of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven.

It should be noted that this corbel of Our Lady, and the large head of S. Peter at the base of J, its immediate predecessor, illustrate the original joint-dedication of the Cathedral.

Opposite to this sacred group is corbel K′, a composition of a very different nature. A minstrel playing on a viol or rebec stands in the central part with his feet upon the head of a hound, from whose mouth issue the stalks of the oak foliage with which the sides of the corbel are filled. This is no wingless angel of the heavenly host joining in the praises of the Queen of Heaven, as in corbel G′, but an ordinary, earthly wandering musician of the class that, in mediaeval times, frequented fairs and places of public amusement in company with tumblers, stilt-walkers, posture-makers, and all kinds of jugglers and trick-performers. In confirmation of this, it may be noted that his feet are shod, and that he wears his hair in the style of the ordinary lower-class men of the day. He has a humorous, laughing face, and his gown is spangled with diamond-shaped patches of gold.

K′

Above his head appears his natural companion, the tumbler or 'jougleur,' as these feat-performers were often called, in the act of turning a somersault, or walking on his hands. His posture is more marvellous than graceful, and the expression of his face betrays the painful effort it costs him to maintain it. The idea conveyed is that he is thus supporting the weight of the ribs which spring from the corbel.

The intrusion of this peculiarly secular couple can only be accounted for on the same general grounds that we have

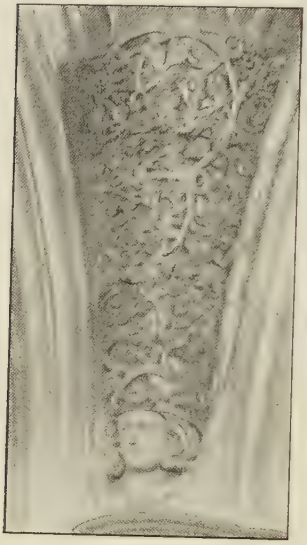
suggested in explanation of the man putting the weight and the wrestlers in the bosses (Nos. 79 and 82; see pp. 71ff). Mr. Cotton describes it as 'S. Cecilia playing the crwth with a grotesque listener.' Mr. Boggis speaks of it as 'a very droll representation of S. Cecilia playing on a viol, while over her head is hovering a misshapen cherub; in allusion to the legend that she invented music and played so divinely that angels from heaven came down to listen to the strains.' We are inclined to suspect that this description must be a bit of sly humour on its author's part; it is certainly, as he says, droll. It has also been suggested that this is a representation of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, dancing before Herod, the minstrel being merely an accessory; there are two or three instances—one is in the glass of Lincoln—in which the dancing of Salome is depicted as an acrobatic performance much like the 'tumbling' of this jougleur; but both figure and costume here are distinctly a man's, and so also is the head with its close, short curls across the brow.

These complete the set which we have ventured to describe as the corbels of the second period; and this last pair exhibits much the same general characteristics as those which we noticed in the four which immediately precede them in our order. These special characteristics are: a concentration of interest on figure subjects, the use of conventional foliage as a mere accessory, and a great lack of refinement in execution, though there is much vigour in design. In this last pair the disproportion of the figures themselves is not so pronounced as in some of those upon which we have already commented; this may be due to increased proficiency on the carver's part, or it may be that the subjects as we now have them—this much defaced Madonna and Child and the peripatetic entertainers—do not so markedly betray the carver's incapacity. The want of refinement in execution is the strongest testimony that the whole set of the second period are from another hand than that which carved the eight presbytery corbels, in which the union of vigour and refinement is so pronounced a characteristic. The contrast between design and execution may perhaps suggest that whilst a master-craftsman was himself responsible for design, the work was done by underlings.

The ten remaining nave corbels belong to the latest and least interesting period of these carvings. This period lies between the years 1327-1350, and is that in which Grandisson completed the six western bays of the nave. So devoid is this work of inspiration or originality that it is difficult to regard it with any enthusiasm. The one conspicuous exception serves rather to emphasize the dead level to which the rest have fallen than to redeem the whole series from condemnation.

It cannot be denied that the carving of these latest corbels, inferior as it is, is still such as to give an effect of great richness to the whole nave arcade. This effect must have been far more conspicuous when their original colouring and gilding was fresh and bright; but it is not due to the intrinsic excellence of either the carving or the designs. The majority are composed of foliage only, though often a small head forms the base. As there is a great similarity in their treatment it will not be necessary to illustrate each one, and we give therefore the four which include heads with the foliage—those lettered N, N′, O′, and P′. The three omitted from our illustrations—L, M, and O—have nothing distinctive in their foliage and are without head-bases.

In all the four given will be observed the very considerable alteration that has taken place in the standard and style of decorative stone-carving since the time of the carving of the second period corbels. We observed in the last chapter (see p. 146) that a considerable interval, some fifteen to twenty years, must have elapsed before the bosses for these last six bays could have been carved. The corbels would probably be somewhat later, for they would be carved *in situ* after the vault had been completed and its scaffolding removed. This is certainly borne out by the further decadence of their style. The naturalistic treatment of the foliage has entirely disappeared, and the stereotyped conventionalism that has superseded it exhibits none of the bold freedom and artistic lines of the admirable early conventional designs of the Early English period. So unnatural is the treatment that it is often difficult to determine what are the plants used as decorative motives. They no longer grow or climb, but are artificially twined



N

N′

O′

P′

to form with their stems more or less symmetrical curves, whilst the leafage is forced into positions determined by the shapes of the spaces thus left.

On L the foliage is intended for that of the single rose; it can be identified by the numerous flowers interspersed. On O′ and P′ the oak is the probable motive, but the central acorn on P′ is almost necessary to make the intention recognizable; the large, undulatory leaves with monotonously curled edges suggest nothing natural—unless it be decay. Of N′, as there is neither flower nor fruit to guide us, it is perhaps better not to speak decidedly, though some of the leaves—they are little more than a series of small lumps—suggest an ultra-decadent idea of the vine. The relief of the carving in all is very poor; but when the backgrounds were a deep rose-colour, of which some traces may still be seen, doubtless the designs stood out better than they do at present.

The heads, two female and two male, at the bases of these four corbels, are much of one type, and might all belong to members of one family. They are all crowned, but are not probably intended for any specific royal persons. The features are well cut and there is a fair amount of modelling in the faces, but they do not appear to be anything more than the work of a well-trained hand—there is obviously so little thought behind them.

The two corbels, L′ and M′, on the north side, do not belong to exactly the same date as the rest of the nave corbels. They carry the vaulting-shafts on either side of the Minstrels' Gallery. From the Fabric Rolls (see FREEMAN, pp. 77-80) it appears that this gallery was an afterthought and was inserted as late as 1353. Probably these corbels were then substituted for others of the same type as the four we have just illustrated. The ogee arches of their canopies accord with this somewhat later date; further, the shape of these corbels, which are broader at the base than at the top, and therefore very ill suited to the curves of the adjacent arch-moldings, also suggests that they were insertions after the nave arcade was finished. The niches formerly contained statues of the Virgin Mary and S. Peter (see OLIVER, *Lives, &c.*, p. 217), to both of whom the Cathedral was dedicated. The large-sized heads at the bases

L′

with upstretched hands and arms carrying these canopied niches are popularly described as portraits of Edward III and his beautiful wife, Queen Philippa. Apart from the fact that these faces have no distinctive marks of portraiture, it is doubtful in the extreme whether this description is correct. The fact that these heads are not crowned renders it very doubtful that royal portraiture was intended. True, the shape of the brackets they support and the ornamental borders (which may be compared with the bracket of K) lend themselves to the suggestion of crowns; but if L′ is carefully examined, it will be clearly seen that there is no fillet encompassing the man's head. From such a fillet the 'leaves' of the crown would spring, and it is a well-marked feature in all the other crowned heads, however insignificant, with which we have met hitherto. The upper part of this seeming 'crown' is octagonal and most evidently an integral part of the bracket above the head, not a tiara on it. Exactly the same details are found in the woman's head and bracket of M′ except that the carving on the lower part of the bracket is richer and even less crown-like than in the other. If, then, this is the royal pair of tradition, we must either say that they have been content to cast aside their crowns in order to have the greater honour of bearing on their heads the

M′

brackets sanctified by the feet of the statues of the Blessed Virgin and S. Peter, or else we must conclude that the carvers knew or cared so little about the form of crowns that they failed to make any proper distinction between them and the brackets above them. We are disposed rather to conclude that there is no sufficient ground for identifying these heads as those of any king and queen; so far as portraiture is concerned it is fairly evident that the faces conform to a type commonly in use among stone-carvers at this period, and, though more carefully executed than some, seem to belong to quite the same family as the lesser heads already noticed in the decadent foliage corbels just described.

P

In corbel P, on the south side, we have an example that stands alone in style among this set of the third period. It is in two main divisions, and presents in its upper compartment the Coronation of the Virgin; in the lower, the Virgin standing and carrying the Holy Child in her arms. A third, small division at the base contains a recumbent man's figure, which may be intended to symbolize the 'old Adam' fallen to rise no more and crushed under foot.

The style of the oak foliage on either side of the Virgin and Child is evidence that the corbel belongs to the same date as L, N′, O′ and P′, for the oak-leaves are identical with those seen in P′, opposite to it. But the faces and figures are so full of expression, so graceful and refined, that one would otherwise have been almost inclined to think that it must be the work of a different and more artistic period. Probably the fact is that a subject of special interest, such as this, and one of which so many excellent examples were extant, called forth more of the artist's thought and individuality than was bestowed upon the conventional foliage and merely typical heads of the other corbels. The

subject of the Coronation of the Virgin, as we have already had occasion to remark, is one often repeated in this cathedral and occupies the place of supreme honour among the vaulting bosses over the High Altar. It would be quite natural that the carver should respond to the challenge of the past and put forth his best skill in reproducing it. It seems quite probable, as we suggested with regard to the bosses (see p. 38), that the carving of purely foliage subjects may have been deputed to pupils and underlings, the master-carver reserving for his own hand such important and sacred subjects as this.

The faces and attitudes of the two censing angels are charming, and the Virgin's own face, with downcast eyes and a sweetly serious expression, is quite beautiful. In the lower representation of her also, though there is more stiffness in the whole figure, the face is very sweet. Miss Agnes Strickland, when speaking of Queen Philippa in her *Lives of the Queens of England*, says that 'it is well known that the portraits of the lovely young Philippa and her princely boy formed the favourite models for the Virgin and Child at that era.' This leaves it open to us to suppose in this gracious figure of the Virgin a more probable portrait of the young queen than in the somewhat coarse and common type of face depicted in the base of corbel M′. Altogether this final corbel of the third series is a good example of that growth of human interest in the carvings of this period upon which we commented in the last chapter (see p. 147) in connection with the bosses in the same portion of the Cathedral.

Two half-corbels against the west wall, lettered Q and Q′ on our plan, complete the series. They are of inferior foliage designs and have no characteristics worthy of illustration or description.

CHAPTER IX.

The Lesser Corbels.

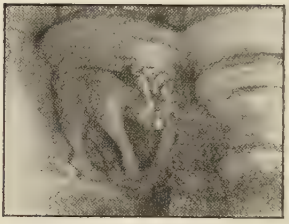
Although the corbels of the main vaulting-shafts constitute a complete series in themselves, there are a very large number of smaller carved corbels serving various purposes disposed throughout the interior fabric of the Cathedral, and some of these must receive mention and illustration in these pages.

Many of them perform a similar function to that discharged by the ones which came under review in the last chapter, for they carry the vaulting-ribs in the chapels and other subordinate parts of the Cathedral. Structurally considered, these are also vaulting-shaft corbels, though the burdens they support are less imposing. The most important in this respect are those in the north and south crossing-bays which unite the transeptal towers with the nave, for these also carry the ribs of the main roof, though only from the clerestory level. But as the carving and design are the features with which we are chiefly concerned it will be preferable to take them in chronological order rather than according to their structural importance.

In the earliest chapels—the Lady Chapel and those of SS. Mary Magdalen and Gabriel—and in the retrochoir the vaulting-ribs all start from the capitals of columns rising straight from the ground; therefore no vaulting-shaft corbels are required. But in each of the two choir-aisle chapels, those dedicated to SS. Andrew and James—which are very nearly as early as the eastern ones—there are two tiny bays of quadripartite vaulting over the window recesses in which the altars originally stood. The diagonal ribs of these spring from small corbels on the eastern sides, but on the western they are borne by the small clustered columns from which the main vaulting-ribs of these chapels spring. Thus in each chapel, close to the two eastern windows, there should occur four of these carved corbels. The one in the south-east angle of S. James's Chapel is missing,

No. 1.

No. 2.



No. 3.

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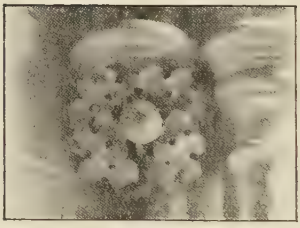

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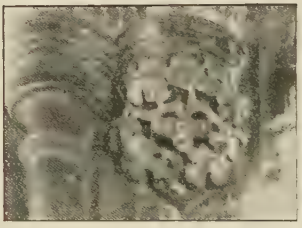

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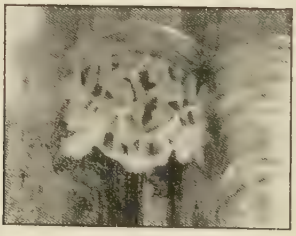
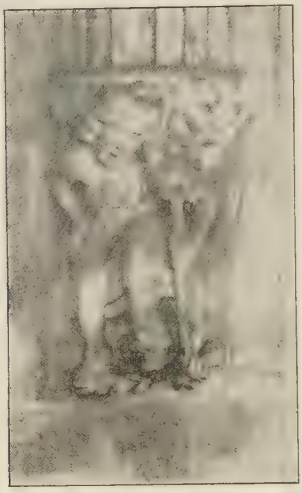


No. 7.

and the rib is merely merged into the masonry of the wall. In the accompanying page of illustrations Nos. 1 to 4 belong to S. Andrew's Chapel, Nos. 5 to 7 to S. James's.

The three latter are probably somewhat earlier in date than those of S. Andrew's, as S. James's Chapel was completed to the glazing of its windows by 1279 (see Fabric Roll, quoted by FREEMAN, *Appendix*, Note 43); and we do not find the final record of work done in S. Andrew's Chapel till 1309. But these entries of final work refer only to details unconnected with the vaulting, and from other evidences it would seem probable that the carving of the vaulting-corbels of these chapels was more nearly contemporary work. We may refer the reader to the remarks on the bosses (p. 36). As the actual carving of corbels was very often left to be executed later, we cannot with any certainty assign it to the same date as the structure in which it occurs. But there is a characteristic difference between the two sets of corbels which, at any rate, strongly suggests a difference in date. The three from S. James's are all of foliage beautifully executed—see especially No. 5—but in S. Andrew's there is a pair of heads in the northern bay and a pair of animals in the southern one, with the merest hint of foliage in this latter pair. The workmanship, too, is not so delicate and refined as in the S. James's corbels; all the evidence bespeaks a different hand and designer, if not a different date. No. 3 appears to represent a pig munching oak-leaves, and No. 4 a hound scratching his ear.

The next set comprises the eight corbels which carry the vaulting-shafts of the small north and south crossing-bays, west of the choir-aisles. They correspond in date to the 'second period' corbels of Chapter VIII, but they possess a distinctive character of their own. They differ from the greater corbels both in size and shape, above all, in design and workmanship. There is no other carving in the Cathedral quite like these, and they have so many characteristics in common that we shall not be far wrong in assigning the whole set to the same hand and brain. They are essentially a secular series; only one of the eight (No. 12) belongs to the 'religious' type of subject—and that one may be perhaps more properly described as ecclesiastical.



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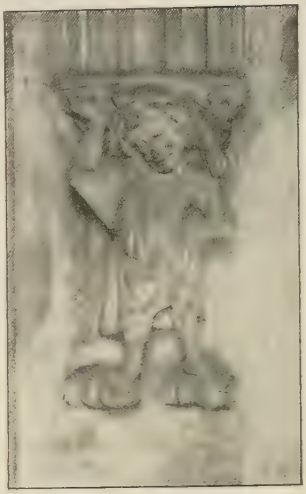

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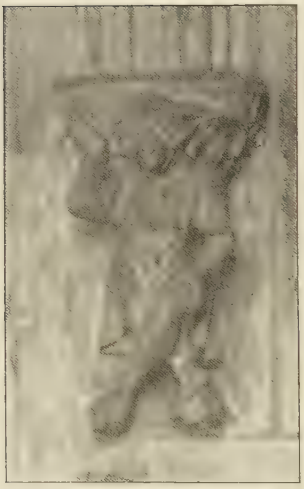
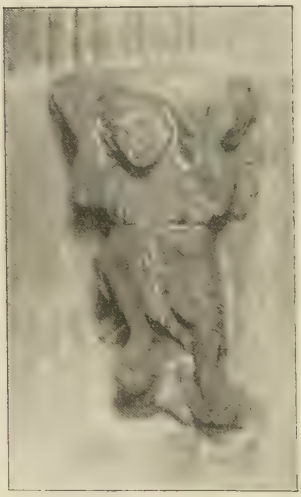


No. 10.



No. 11.

Vaulting-Shaft Corbels of the North Crossing-Bay.

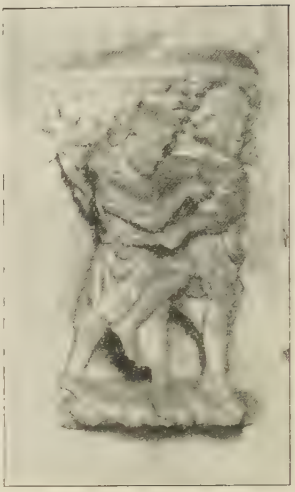
Whether there is any sequence of design in the series we must leave the reader to judge.

Let us examine first the four which belong to the north crossing-bay, Nos. 8—11. Nos. 8 and 9 are on the eastern side and Nos. 10 and 11 on the western. Of the eastern pair, No. 8 represents a lame man with his crutch, yielding his back to the burden of the shafting. No. 9 has his right hand raised to sustain the load which presses on his head. The peculiar carving of the eyeballs suggests that he is perhaps blind. If so, the pair may have been suggested by the passage in S. Matthew's Gospel (xxi, 14) where it is mentioned that 'the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and He healed them.' No. 10 is a man, of a common citizen type, seated with legs crossed and his right hand raised in support of the base of the vaulting-shafts. He is smiling cheerfully, as though the burden weighed lightly upon him. No. 11 is a more comely-featured man, wearing the 'chaperon' or 'aumusse,' which was the common head-dress of men and women in the time of Edward II. He is upholding the base with both hands. His attitude, one leg raised and the foot planted on a stone, effectively suggests the idea that he is supporting a weight.

In all the four the actual carving is very rough and coarse, but there is a good deal of imagination and character in the attitudes.

In the corresponding southern bay the two eastern subjects, Nos. 12 and 13, are more clearly definable than the others. On No. 12 we have a group of a bishop and two attendant deacons, which is practically the same design as that on the corbel in the choir, lettered H′ on our plan, except that here there is no smiling queen's head on the bracket. The carving is much coarser and the detail poor, but otherwise there is little to distinguish this group from its predecessor. No. 13 is occupied by two wrestlers, and though their execution is decidedly rough there is considerable energy and life in their action. It is noteworthy that the bare feet are better carved than any other parts of the figures. The rest of the series represent men with shod feet, and in the barefooted wrestlers we have a tribute to the sculptor's fidelity to fact rather than a betrayal of his ignorance of symbolical intention. The attitudes of the two

No. 12.



No. 13.

No. 14.

No. 15.

Vaulting-Shaft Corbels of the South Crossing-Bay.

figures are very similar to those of the wrestling couple in the choir vault—a reproduction of the boss is given on p. 74. No. 14 presents a curious pair. The upper figure is kneeling on the back of the lower one, with his left foot planted on his fellow's head. Of the lower one, who is lying prostrate, only head, face and shoulders with one arm and hand are visible. Both are wearing the 'chaperon;' the upper figure wears it halo-wise, but his depressed colleague shows better the hood-like form as in No. 9 in the north crossing-bay. The superior figure supports the vaulting-shaft base with his right hand, whilst his left hangs across his raised knee; the lower figure, apparently much embarrassed by the weight above him, grasps his oppressor's right foot.

In No. 15 one figure alone has the whole responsibility of supporting the vaulting-shafts, and seems to find it a sorry business. At first this figure might be taken for a woman, but careful comparison with the others shows that the feminine-looking head-dress is nothing more than the same hood with the side lapels more conspicuously shown. This hood, according to PLANCHÉ (see *Cyclopaedia of Costume*, p. 292), 'was a sort of pointed bag with an oval opening for the face; the point, sometimes of great length, either hanging down behind, or twisted round the head, or, if short, sticking up or dangling down according to fancy or circumstances. These tails were called tippets, or liripipes.' The rest of No. 15's costume is also identical with that of the other men of this series, and is far too short in the skirt for that of a woman in those days. This dreary weight-bearer sits at his task with drooping head and both elbows on his knees, whilst his hands are raised on either side to carry the base of the vaulting-shafts above him. There is very little detail in the carving.

In the whole set of eight the small allowance of foliage that garnishes the figures—sometimes only a single leaf—is, nevertheless, of importance, for from its character it is possible to determine, approximately, the date of the carvings. It corresponds so exactly with that seen in the four western bays of the choir that there can be no doubt that this series was also executed during the same period (*i.e.*, the end of Stapeldon's episcopate); but their very inferior

No. 16.

No. 17.

No. 18.

workmanship reminds us of those indications found in the bosses of the crossing-vaults, which led us to conclude that the carving of this portion of the church was executed by some craftsman inferior in skill to any that had gone before, or that followed after.

There seems to be little, if any, symbolic element introduced into the designs of this set of corbels. Had their carver any intention beyond that of roughly ornamenting the blocks he was bidden to fashion into some seemliness? We are perhaps in danger of reading some fancy of our own into them by way of interpretation; but perhaps this set devoted to the depiction of the common folk in their everyday attire engaged upon monotonous tasks, and relieved only by the one subject of an ecclesiastic in the act of benediction, was placed here at the threshold of the choir to intimate the Church's gracious oversight of common life and her welcome for the working-folk.

Three more vaulting-shaft corbels remain to be illustrated. First, a striking pair of heads from S. Edmund's Chapel, Nos. 16 and 17, which are evidently a relic of the days before the reconstruction of this portion of the church. In No. 16 we have again the very voluminous head covering worn by the man, whilst the woman's head in No. 17 is covered only with its abundant curls confined by a narrow fillet of ribbon. In both these faces the features are modelled with much care, and even the teeth are visible between the half-parted lips. The effect of the eyes is much spoilt by the heavy shadows thrown below them; this is not the fault of the carver, but is due to the way in which the light from adjacent windows falls upon them.

The last of all the series, No. 18, occurs in the south-west angle of the nave wall, and is a by no means discreditable bit of handiwork. The design is of conventional foliage and flowers, but it is well undercut, and very rich in its effect.

It remains to give a few specimens from the multitudinous array of carved corbels which everywhere greet the spectator, looking down from triforium, wall-arcades, hood-mold terminations and other minor interior vantage grounds. On p. 216 are six from the Lady Chapel, which

all do duty as hood-mold terminations, and may serve here as examples. A strong sense of humour is observable throughout this set: the huntsman winding his horn and the perplexed hound, the shaven ecclesiastic, the laughing monk with protruded tongue, the leopard-like head with its human expression are a very fair representation of the preponderating type of motive.

To attempt to illustrate one-half of this great gallery would only be to weary the reader's patience. The thirty-two compartments of the triforium arcade is enriched in this manner, each compartment containing a set of five, mainly of heads, though some few are of foliage and animal subjects. Of the one hundred and sixty carvings in this arcade alone no two, so far as we have observed, are alike.

Any who would still further study the imagination, humour, ingenuity and skill of the mediaeval carvers may seat themselves at their leisure in Exeter Cathedral and, with a strong pair of field-glasses, from one point after another, examine for themselves all that has not been included in the pages of this book. And at the same time they may discover some profit and amusement in verifying some of the two hundred and fifty carvings that are reproduced herein.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

(1.) *On Boss No.* 58 (*see pp.* 51-4).

Since going to press we are indebted to Mr. G. C. Druce for directing our attention to a source from which a probable explanation of this perplexing subject may be derived.

In the *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. VIII., No. XXXII. (1905), Mr. D. S. MacColl has an interesting article entitled 'Grania in Church; or the Clever Daughter.' In it he gives several variants of a folk-tale which is based upon the familiar riddling wit-contest, with special reference to the carving on a misericord in Worcester Cathedral. The incident of a rider whose steed is a goat and whose only clothing is a net wrapped round the shoulders, recurs in two or three of the variants. There are several circumstances in the main story which do not agree with the conditions our particular subject requires. The rider, in all the versions, is a woman; it is necessary to the 'plot' of the tale that the heroine be 'neither walking nor riding,' which is generally represented by having one foot across the animal's back, whilst the other rests on the ground. The rider on the boss is a man and is fairly mounted on his steed. Further, a 'gift' of an equivocal nature, or an enemy and a friend, were always a part of the rider's required outfit; on the boss the rider has no companion and bears no gift.

Notwithstanding these important differences, the naked body of the rider, the net over the shoulders, and the goat as steed, are resemblances too important to be set aside as coincidences. Among the folk-tales quoted by Mr. MacColl there are a great many variants, yet evidently a common origin, and it seems most probable that the subject in this boss is simply one more variant, of which the precise details are not preserved for us in any literary form.

In connection with one of the wit-duels that he quotes, Mr. MacColl shows how in mediaeval times these ancient folk-tales were more or less adroitly employed by the friars

and other religious as vehicles of doctrine or of moral sentiments; and that, therefore, they appear in mediaeval church sculptures and carvings charged with most far-fetched allusions and ingenious lessons. Frequently, as in the instance under consideration, neither the original folk-tale nor its particular application to religious doctrine can be clearly traced. But it is certain that in mediaeval imagery, as Mr. MacColl remarks, 'the element that was casual or purely fantastic is narrowed, as our knowledge increases, to a small and smaller part,' and 'it is probable, therefore, that scenes which appear to be introduced for the sake of their romance or farce, were admitted because a moral had been tacked to them in a sermon or collection of fables.'

It remains to add that, in the course of our survey, we have found what appears to be another representation of the subject in Exeter Cathedral. It adorns the capital of a window-shaft in the clerestory of the nave—the south-easternmost window; but it is too much mutilated to be worth reproduction.

(2.) *On Boss No.* 129 (*see p.* 82).

Another West-country church in which this subject occurs as a boss is S. Mary Magdalen's, Taunton. It is also carved on misericords in Chester, Winchester and Worcester Cathedrals.

(3.) *On Corbel K'* (*see p.* 199).

It is not at all impossible that the subject of this corbel was suggested by an old French legend of the twelfth century, in which a tumbler, abandoning his occupation for a religious life, entered the great monastery of Clairvaulx, and was then greatly distressed to find that he had no 'service' to offer wherewith to 'make his penance.' But presently it occurred to him that his 'trade' of tumbling might be devoted to that end; and the legend goes on to describe all his feats of tumbling and their gracious reception by 'Our Lady,' at whose altar in the crypt of the monastery he performed these curious devotions in secret. Amongst others it is specially mentioned that 'he tumbled with his feet up in the air, walked and went on two hands that he might journey closer to the ground.'

The transcriber of this legend—the Rev. P. H. Wicksteed—tells us, in his prefatory note, that it is written in lines of eight syllables, rhymed in couplets. He also says that its text, 'in French of the end of the twelfth century, was published by Foerster in the *Romania*, Vol. II., 1872, from a MS. in the Arsenal. Nothing is known of its origin. Gröber published the variants of two other MSS. in the *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* for 1880.'

Mr. Wicksteed's English prose transcription is entitled 'Our Lady's Tumbler,' and was published by Dent in 1900. It is well worth perusal.

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